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## **Ominous calm : autochtony and sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba violence and peace, Ghana**

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### **Citation**

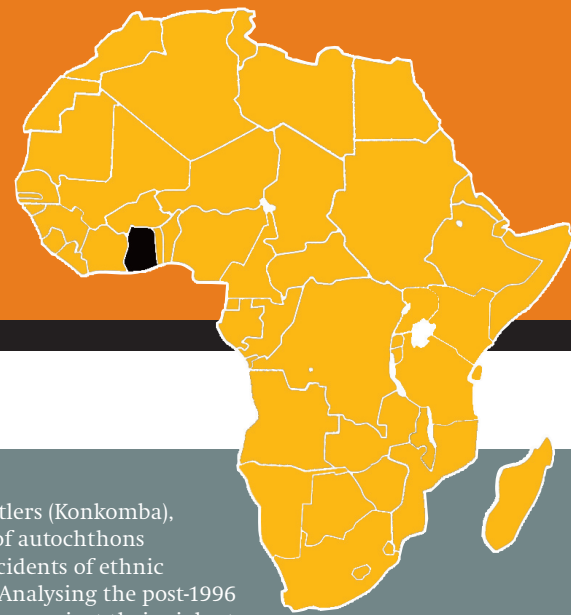
Wienia, M. (2009). *Ominous calm : autochtony and sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba violence and peace, Ghana*. Leiden: African Studies Centre. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/14508>

Version: Publisher's Version

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



African Studies Collection 21

Martijn Wienia

Ominous calm



Why did a conflict between a majority of settlers (Konkomba), claiming equal citizenship, and a minority of autochthons (Nanumba) produce both Ghana's largest incidents of ethnic cleansing and a subsequent ominous calm? Analysing the post-1996 peace accord Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence against their violent past and in Ghana's political context as one of Africa's promising nations, this ethnographic study shows that the conflict has two forms. One is sovereign violence and another is a persistent silence in relation to legalistic speeches. Breaking out of these forms may not so much require a reconciliation, as peace brokers proposed, but a political compromise.

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## Ominous calm

### Autochthony and sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba violence and peace, Ghana



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21



Martijn Wienia

African Studies Centre



# Ominous calm

## Autochthony and sovereignty in Konkomba/Nanumba violence and peace, Ghana

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van  
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,  
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. P.F. van der Heijden,  
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties  
te verdedigen op dinsdag 15 december 2009  
klokke 15 uur

door  
Martijn Wienia  
geboren te Utrecht in 1979

Promotor:

Prof. Dr. P.J. Pels

Overige leden Promotiecommissie:

Prof. Dr. P.L. Geschiere

Prof. Dr. L.J. de Haan

Dr. S.W.J. Luning

Dr. P. Skalník

African Studies Centre  
African Studies Collection, vol. 21

# Ominous calm

Autochthony and sovereignty in  
Konkomba/Nanumba violence  
and peace, Ghana

Martijn Wienia

Published by:  
African Studies Centre  
P.O. Box 9555  
2300 RB Leiden  
The Netherlands  
[asc@ascleiden.nl](mailto:asc@ascleiden.nl)  
[www.ascleiden.nl](http://www.ascleiden.nl)

Photograph front cover: Konkomba students showing a bowl for measurement in a  
Chamba peace meeting on 3 January 2007 (© Martijn Wienia)

Printed by Ipskamp Drukkers, Enschede

ISBN 978-90-5448-091-4

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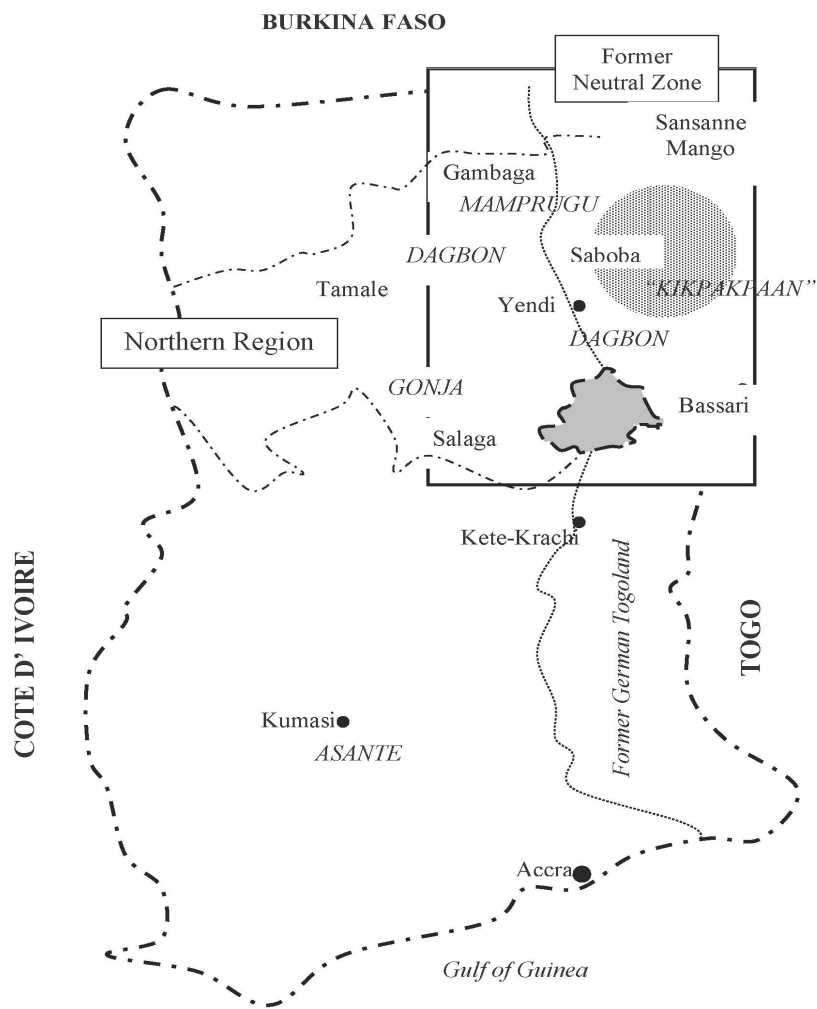
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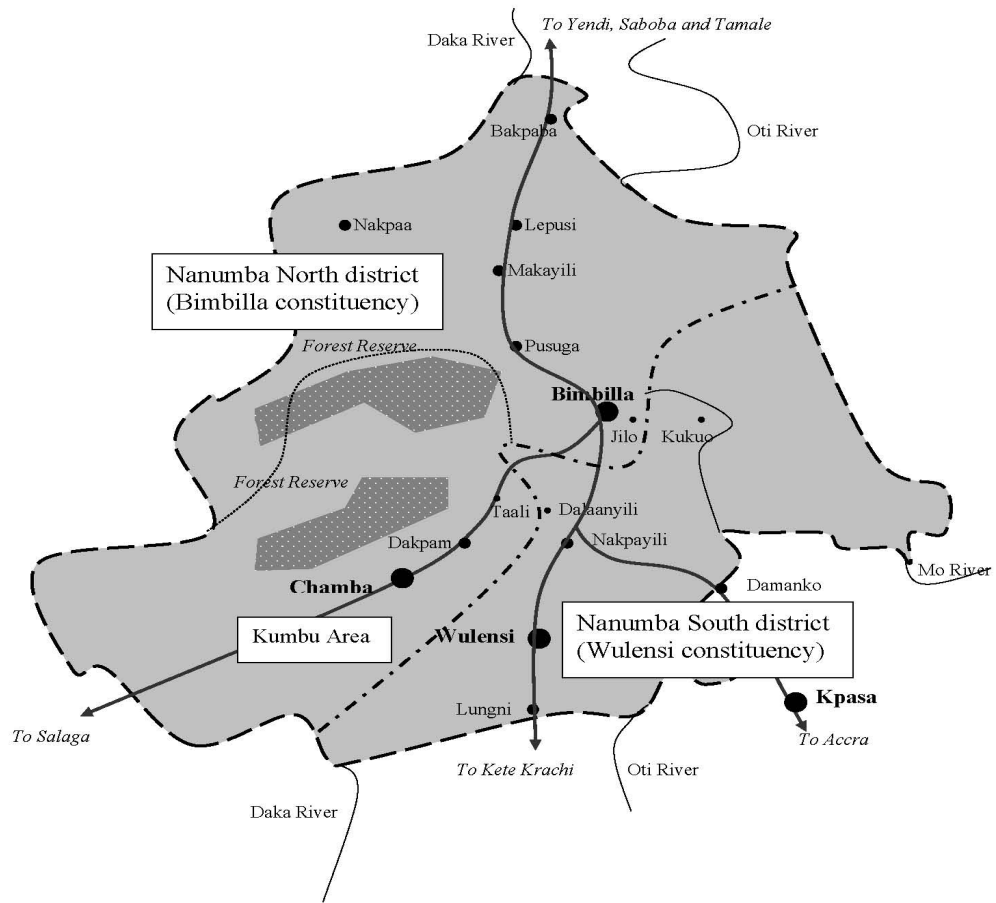
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Map 2 Nanun

## Acknowledgements

This book was ‘written’ in many places, as I biked through the rolling hills of Nanun, swam in a Nijmegen pool, strolled through Hyde Park or, why not, sat behind my desk. Along the way, hundreds of people have supported me or contributed to this book. Thanks to almost four hundred interlocutors, especially the wonderful people of Nanun, who voluntarily gave me a bit – or often a lot – of their time to ‘sit’ with me.

Financial support from the Wenner-Gren Foundation and Leiden University Fund is acknowledged and appreciated. My gratitude to the Nanumba North and South District Assemblies, the Nanumba Traditional Council, the Regional High Court and Regional House of Chiefs for their cooperation and the Nanumba District Security Council for taking a huge interest in my safety. A special vow of thanks goes to Jon P. Kirby, former director of the Tamale Institute for Cross-Cultural Studies, and to the wonderful people of the Catholic parishes in Saboba, Bimbilla and Chamba for their encouragement and hospitality. Thank you, Peter Skalník, for encouraging my fieldwork in Nanun. I enjoyed the professional and kind assistance of the staff at CNWS, the library of the African Studies Centre in Leiden, the Public Records departments in Accra, Tamale and Bimbilla, the Tamale Institute for Cross-Cultural Studies and the Centre for African Studies at the University of Ghana.

Thanks to Felix Ameka for helping me learn Likpakpaln, a language alien to both of us. I enjoyed scholarly discussions with Charles Piot, Franklin Tjon Sie Fat, Nerina Weiss, Paul Nugent, Peter Skalník, Peter Geschiere & Sabine Luning and to colleagues working on conflicts and peace in northern Ghana: Albert Awedoba, Allan Dawson, Artur Bogner, Benjamin Talton, Julia Jönsson and in particular Julie & Tony Kaye, with whom I shared a wonderful time in Tamale. In the private sector, Ada van der Linde, Pauline Versteegh & Rein Dekker have shared their expertise with me.

Many thanks to my colleagues at the African Studies Centre, Ghana Study Group, CNWS Cohort Meetings and the Young Anthropologists seminars, notably Amber Gemmeke, Annemarie Samuels, Dorien Zandbergen, Lotte Pelckmans, Maarten Onneweer, Manja Bomhoff, Roos Gerritsen, Tryfon Bampilis, Wendelmoet Hamelink & Willemijn Waal. Thanks to Fedor de Beer for our conversations on the magic of science and for his cautions that completing a dissertation was ‘hell’.

What a privilege I have had to work with Marshall Adam, Mohammed ibn Abass, Ben Hussein & Isaac Sukpen. I have no words for Mariam and her sisters at Salisu's & Justina ('mama'), and I was blessed working with Adam Sofo, Iddrisu Issah, Paul Jakpal, Jacob Jagri & Isaac Makuwi. Thanks to my parents-in-law for their visit to us in Nanun and many thanks to my parents for their unabated support and encouragement. Nicolien, thank you for loving support, for sharing our Ghana experiences and for enduring my 'eureka moments'.

No person in Nanun has encouraged and supported me more than Salisu Wumbei, right from my first arrival in Nanun as an MA student in 2002 until my 2007 and beyond. This book would not have existed in this form without his unreserved and enthusiastic cooperation. He helped me find assistants, interlocutors and documentation, commented on my findings and encouraged me to 'see for myself'. He also introduced me to various authorities in Nanun and took a responsibility in my personal health and well-being. I was shocked by the news of Salisu's death which came on the very same day I completed this book. I have to miss his comments on this book, but I want to dedicate this work to him.







## Introduction

### Ominous or auspicious soccer

Tensions between autochthons and settlers or immigrants have been a worrying phenomenon in many parts of the world, from Europe to Africa and beyond. In a striking but relatively unknown case in north-eastern Ghana, such tensions found a way out in unimaginable ethnic cleansing between autochthons and a dominant group of immigrants. Although the analysis of these hostilities contributes a lot to a better understanding of ethnic violence throughout the globe, this study specifically seeks to explore the possibilities of making peace between autochthons and immigrants. Let's specify this focus with a case study.

On 15 May 2005, I watched the Chamba Soccer Heroes play a friendly match against the Nanumba Nationals, the Bimbilla town team which successfully plays in Ghana's second league. The Chamba team was made up of Konkomba players and that of Bimbilla town of Nanumba. The exceptionality of this match has to be understood against the background of three episodes of communal violence between members of the Konkomba and Nanumba ethnic groups in 1981, 1994 and 1995 in the Nanumba districts (congruent with the Nanumba Traditional Area of Nanun), in the Northern Region of Ghana. Each lasted for only a few days, but left thousands of civilians dead. These were the most intense outbursts of violence in Ghana, an otherwise relatively peaceful country enjoying civil rule. A hotchpotch of relief-providing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) brokered a successful peace accord between delegates of both groups in 1996.

Visiting this soccer match was part of my study. The Chamba soccer team had arranged a large yam truck to convey around forty players and supporters (myself

included) to Bimbilla town (30 km to the east) for a nominal fee. In a cacophony of drumming, the truck left Chamba, a predominantly Konkomba town of some 7000 inhabitants. The journey went through rolling hills on which farmers amidst abundant yam mounts cheerfully raised their hoes as the truck passed by. Half-way to Bimbilla, we crossed Dakpam with its still ruined chiefly palace, its crumbling colonial office from which a Nanumba sniper used to kill Konkomba attackers and the abandoned well which holds a Nanumba mass grave. But the truck drove on and the drumming continued. After Dakpam, we crossed another three villages with separate Konkomba and Nanumba quarters before reaching the environs of Bimbilla, the district and traditional area capital with over 20,000 inhabitants, where no Konkomba have permanently lived since the outbreak of hostilities in 1981.

When the truck reached its destination, the Bimbilla Secondary School football pitch, the Chamba supporters had become quiet. As the match started, Nanumba Nationals scored twice in three minutes, a lead they increased to a final score of seven goals to one. But the players shook hands and parted as if the match had ended in an insignificant draw. The Chamba boys walked to town to buy some snacks, and subsequently their truck left quietly in the night. The next morning – and the following days – the match was however the talk of the town in Chamba. By-passers repeatedly stopped at the house of my assistant – the Soccer Heroes’ striker – and teased him with the score, saying ‘you are just a bush team!’

The point of this seemingly insignificant narrative is partly in what happened – Konkomba and Nanumba men voluntarily played a soccer match against each other – but especially in what did *not* happen. Matches in Nanun, as elsewhere in the world, seem to have the capacity to symbolise and canalise all sorts of social strife and are characterised by biting insults and nasty tackles. A few weeks after this match, for example, the Chamba team played a friendly match against a neighbouring Konkomba team, one which local police had to close after one of the teams started hurling stones at the other. Compared to this and all other intra-ethnic matches I watched, that between Bimbilla and Chamba was surprisingly calm and devoid of any provocation.

Because I encountered this calm not only in the soccer match, but many informants continuously describe their ‘peace’ as calm or coolness (Konkomba *nsudoon*; Nanumba *sodoo*) and not as unity (Konkomba *kimòkbaan*; Nanumba *nangbanyini*), I realised that it was probably impossible to understand Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence without putting such calm or excessive normality of their interactions central. This observation is important because the main broker of the 1996 peace agreement on the invitation of the NGO Consortium, suspected post-conflict calm. Hizkias Assefa, a devout Christian from Ethiopia,

was the director of the Kenyan Nairobi Peace Initiative and he has since mediated in various peace processes around the continent. As one of the most prominent scholars in peace studies, his work addressed several pertinent issues in this introduction. In his most influential publication *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm* (1993), which formed the basis of the Ghanaian peace workshops, Assefa argued that the absence of violence is not the same as peace, because the people's suppression of discussing conflict issues is born from their 'misguided perception that by avoiding conflict, it will go away' (Assefa 1996 [1993]: 43-44). For Assefa, peace-building always required a transformative 'reconciliation politics' to construct 'relationships full of energy and differences' (op. cit.: 56-57).

However, the question is whether there has ever been an energetic Konkomba/Nanumba peace to fall back on. Peter Skalník, the anthropologist who has conducted decades of fieldwork in Nanun told me when I presented the above case to him, that such a voluntary match would have been unthinkable in the pre-conflict era (Skalník, personal communication) & David Tait, an influential political anthropologist working among Konkomba in the 1950s, described the relationships between Konkomba and neighbouring ethnic groups as a permanent state of reserve (Tait 1953). From that perspective, the soccer match may have been auspicious rather than ominous.

This book is about Konkomba/Nanumba peace and its manifestations. My line of argumentation will be that a conflict avoidance calm is eclipsed by a legalistic discourse which produces both authoritative statements and, in their shadow, silences about the key conflict issue in Nanun. This key issue, as I seek to unravel, is the extent to which Konkomba as settlers are prepared to subordinate their citizenship and subject themselves to a Nanumba autochthonous power of decision about local leadership in Nanun. Rather than avoiding these issues, Konkomba and Nanumba seemed to save them for what they considered to be the right form and occasion, often a legal setting. Whereas the soccer match between the Nanumba townspeople and the Konkomba 'from the bush' had a strong symbolic value, players and supporters did not allude to this value during the match.

The calm observed, then, was a deliberate silence for the sake of security and a future resolution of the conflict. I will demonstrate that the communal violence which haunted Nanun has had the same objectives of security and clarification. Making this point convincing requires a conceptualisation of both violence and peace and how they alternated in cycles of escalation and de-escalation in Nanun. To do so, I will focus on the case of a local leadership dispute in Chamba town between Konkomba and Nanumba from 1996 to 2007 and more specifically on the attempts to peacefully solve this dispute. This argument unfolds between the

1996 peace agreements and 2007 ‘renewed commitments’ to these agreements, following serious tensions in Chamba and Bimbilla.

Before describing how this line of thought structures the rest of this book, this chapter embeds my research focus in the ethnographic field of Nanun and in relevant theoretical debates. This introduction consists of roughly three parts. After an introduction to the setting of this study and its scholarly niche, I construct a theoretical framework, a cluster of related issues in political anthropology, to inform my argument. The first theoretical section contextualises what may be called the content of the Konkomba/Nanumba contestations: The tension between citizen and subject positions in discourses of autochthony and ethnicity. From there, I study the forms in which this cluster of themes has been addressed, respectively in violence, peace-building and the current legalistic petitions. The third and final part of this chapter clarifies the structure of the rest of the book by using the 1996 peace agreements as a leitmotiv and makes a number of methodological dilemmas, to which I return in the final conclusion, explicit.

## Konkomba/Nanumba violence and peace

Why was there the need for a peace accord in the first place? In spite of its manifestations, the Konkomba/Nanumba violence is better not interpreted as age-old ‘tribal’ hatred. It was not until the 1920s, during British colonialism, that Konkomba farmers from the Ghana/Togo borderlands settled in the fertile and sparsely populated Nanumba land hundred kilometres to the south. This was an unplanned family movement, but together they came in such great numbers that within decades, they outnumbered the autochthonous Nanumba perhaps two to one. This demography of Nanun has no equivalent in Ghana.

It is crucial to note from the onset that land scarcity has never been a significant issue in Nanun until very recently. With 144,278 inhabitants in an area of 4178 km<sup>2</sup>, it had a population density half that of the national average by 2000 (Ghana Statistical Service 2002). Rather, it was however not until the 1970s, against the backdrop of ethnic emancipation movements, that Konkomba and Nanumba leaders started blaming each other’s backwardness and claiming the development they felt entitled to. The resulting contestation between Nanumba, who have claimed certain political and economic privileges as the autochthons in Nanun, and Konkomba, who in spite of accepting their settler status demand equal citizenship, exemplifies what is known in political anthropology as the ‘politics of belonging’ (see below). The Nanun case may contribute to a better understanding of these politics, not only because of its demographic make-up but also because of the huge outbursts of violence emanating from these and the bold attempt to peacefully resolve these tensions.

The Konkomba/Nanumba conflict has actually revolved around the same problem for three decades: Whether a form of local Konkomba self-determinacy in Nanun was a right or a revolt. The general Nanumba theory has supported the latter view, namely that such leadership flouts Nanumba authority as landowners and consequently, challenged the Nanumba title to land and the integrity of the Nanumba traditional area attached to this title. Many Konkomba, on the contrary, interpreted this Nanumba position as a sign that their livelihood in Nanun was a privilege rather than a citizenship right. Over time, this controversy fed mutual theories of exploitation: Nanumba found their hospitality taken for granted because Konkomba flourished on their lands without paying respect to their leadership; Konkomba felt denigrated because they felt that they could live in Nanun only by the grace of oppressive Nanumba authorities. The 1996 peace agreements aimed to stop both the mutual fear of being displaced from Nanun and the mutual sentiments of being exploited by stipulating that Konkomba and Nanumba would positively coexist in Nanun as ‘brothers in development’ (see below).

As I show in greater detail in chapter two, three events in 1979 brought Konkomba and Nanumba in conflict. First, as Ghana returned to civil rule after almost a decade of military rule, a new constitution was passed which sought to integrate ‘traditional’ forms of administration into government. The ‘modern’ state delegated its sovereignty in terms of land tenure and settlement regulations to chieftaincy, as it was regulated by customary law (Ray 1996: 189). In Nanun, only Nanumba customary law, which had been drawn up a year earlier, was recognised, because only they were autochthonous, as an ethnic group represented by their chieftaincy. According to these regulations, settlers and their children who were born and bred in Nanun and who had acquired full local citizenship, were still strangers according to customary law and could be removed from Nanun if they displayed ‘bad character or contempt for authority’.

Second, a few months after the constitution’s endorsement, the Nanumba paramount chief Bimbilla Naa won a decade-long court case between him and the paramount chief of Akyodé to the south about the entitlement to the area around Kpasa town, which was mostly inhabited by Konkomba. The Bimbilla Naa installed Nanumba chiefs in this area, but local Konkomba did not recognise the authority of these chiefs.

Third, late in 1979, the Bimbilla branch of the recently established Konkomba Youth Association installed a headman to arbitrate Konkomba marital cases in town. In the 1960s and 1970s, as elsewhere in the country, both Konkomba and Nanumba Youth Associations tried to mobilize their ethnic groups for rural development. Rather than an age category, youth in Ghana implied a socio-political denomination of literate modernizers aspiring to territorial or ethnic

‘unity for development’ by creating cohesive narratives, rituals and symbols and lobbying on the national and regional level claiming to speak on behalf of their entire ethnic groups (Lentz 1995: 395, 416; 1994: 461). The development agendas of these associations combined a pursuit of national or regional resources and an emancipation or modernization of their ethnic groups (see chapter two).

The Nanumba Youth Association tried to overcome the outdated tribute regulations of their mostly illiterate chiefs, while the Konkomba Youth Association focused on the feuds among, and general backwardness of, their target group. Konkomba youth were struggling to overcome the many disputes in arranged marriages which they thought retarded their ethnic unity. Realizing that they could not erase these marriage customs overnight, they at least claimed the right to arbitrate these cases themselves rather than Nanumba chiefs who were unfamiliar with Konkomba culture. The Bimbilla Naa regarded this a subversion of his sovereignty and gave the Konkomba arbitrator an ultimatum to stop his ‘illegal’ activities. When the latter ignored this ultimatum, he was removed from Bimbilla.

In 1981, as the Konkomba Youth Association went to High Court to defend the citizenship right of free settlement, Nanumba chiefs and the activists of the Nanumba Youth Association removed the Konkomba youth and their families from Bimbilla town. The next morning, Konkomba chased or killed the Nanumba chiefs and all other Nanumba living in the Kpasa area.

Violence neither broke out because Konkomba found Nanumba chiefs backward and ‘feudal’, because most Nanumba agreed with them, nor because Nanumba considered Konkomba backward and warlike, because most Konkomba agreed with them. Rather, it was a mutual sense of being victimised by the others’ illegal action which led to violence. Konkomba considered their subjection to Nanumba chiefs a violation of their citizenship rights, while Nanumba considered the Konkomba rejection of Nanumba authority a violation of their traditional rights as autochthons in Nanun. So while Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence has been shrouded in mutual sentiments of exploitation – Konkomba exhaust the land, while Nanumba are feudal – has just been a latent condition for victimhood about what they considered the illegal subordination of their autochthony or citizen equality. As the President of Ghana stuck to this constitutional paradox, Konkomba and Nanumba took the law into their own hands in 1981. The way in which the internal Konkomba and Nanumba moral ethnicities were eclipsed by a newly found but seemingly age-old political tribalism shocked the nation.

After several tense months with regular ambushing, Nanumba youth tried to restore Nanumba sovereignty over the Kpasa area, but their expedition resulted in mutual ethnic cleansing which claimed thousands of lives, especially of

Nanumba, until the national army stopped the fighting. President Limann personally 'reconciled' Konkomba and Nanumba and installed a commission of inquiry to investigate the war. Half a year after the violence, however, the Limann administration was toppled in a military coup and the military leader (Jerry Rawlings) blamed the Konkomba/Nanumba war on Limann's waning regime and suspended the commission of inquiry.

The case simmered silently in Nanun and produced mutual conspiracy theories about future ethnic cleansing. After the 1981 violence, Konkomba and Nanumba leaders strengthened their citizenship and autochthony claims, while rhetorically challenging each other's claims: KOYA openly started to challenge Nanumba autochthony in Nanun, while Nanumba spokesmen challenged Konkomba citizenship, especially after Ghana's return to civil rule in 1992. After thirteen years, as Ghana had just returned to civil rule and reinstalled the constitution, a market riot over the purchase of a guinea fowl south of Bimbilla sparked off violence between Konkomba and Nanumba again. Within three days, Konkomba had driven Nanumba together in Bimbilla and its vicinity, while they controlled the rest of Nanun.

Again, the army had to save Bimbilla but a state of emergency, ceasefire and commission of inquiry could not stop the violence. After a year of hostilities of growing intensity, communal violence started again when a prominent Konkomba ran into a Nanumba ambush early 1995. This event motivated relief-providing NGOs to engage in an alternative peace process led by Hizkias Assefa, which soon eclipsed the government commission of inquiry and resulted in the peace agreement a year later.

In a series of peace workshops focused on reconciliation, Konkomba and Nanumba delegates accepted to coexist in Nanun. According to the resulting peace accord, Nanumba were autochthons, while Konkomba were equal citizens; Nanumba would not use their autochthony privileges to denigrate Konkomba citizenship rights, while Konkomba would not subvert Nanumba autochthony with their citizenship majority. In other words, 'modern' and 'traditional' politics would be disentangled (see below).

Since 1996, there has been no Konkomba/Nanumba violence but although the issue of Konkomba leadership had been addressed in the peace agreement, a case of local Konkomba leadership in Chamba town threatened to escalate in 2002 and 2006/early 2007. What is about this issue, which is actually embedded in a cluster of related issues, that it seems to have haunted Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence for nearly three decades? And how should we assess the 2002 and 2006/2007 tensions; positively, because no violence occurred, or negatively, because apparently, this issue still has the potential to ignite ethnic tensions in Nanun? Answering these pressing questions requires a theoretical conceptualiza-

tion of the issue of Konkomba leadership in the context of the constitutional paradox sketched above and the link between ethnicity and autochthony, but especially how this issue has been addressed violently and peacefully.

Before turning to these theoretical themes, it has to be stressed that the Konkomba/Nanumba conflicts have been the largest of more than a dozen ethnic conflicts with growing intensity in the Northern Region of Ghana from the late 1970s until the mid-1990s. The 1994 violence erupted amidst tensions in adjacent parts of northern Ghana and after the market riot, fighting spread over the entire eastern part of the Northern Region, an area the size of the Netherlands. The violence between Konkomba and Nanumba even seemed to dissolve in a wider confrontation in which Dagomba and Gonja allied with Nanumba to combat Konkomba. However, in the subsequent peace processes, these occasional alliances were eclipsed by local peculiarities. So while I have benefited much from the available insightful comparative studies of these series of conflicts (Bogner 2000: 183; Brukum 2000: 131; Drucker Brown 1995; Jönsson 2007; Pul 2003: 62), the focus of this study requires going beyond these accounts.

The Konkomba/Nanumba peace was the last and most difficult to accomplish and with a reason. A brief overview of the other conflicts will show the difference with adjacent conflicts. British colonialism fixed a distinction between groups centralised around chieftaincy with a common history of conquering several 'indigenous' but segmented lineage societies, the latter who were to be integrated into the lower ranks of the formers' chiefdoms (see chapter two; cf. Bogner 1996; Brukum 2000: 139; Drucker Brown 1995; Jönsson 2007: 25; Katanga 1994; Kirby 2002; Pul 2003: 57, 60). After Independence, the constitutional re-confirmation of chieftaincy and its entitlement to land in Ghana's Third Republic (1979-1981) and Fourth Republic (1992-), boosted the ethnic development agenda of centralised groups (Dagomba, Gonja and Nanumba) but thwarted that of a dozen so-called 'minorities', some of whom, especially Konkomba, were demographic majorities (Bogner 2000: 187; Brukum 2001; Drucker Brown 1995: 51; Jönsson 2007: 9). Throughout the Northern Region, numerous 'minorities' started to contest their subject position, using their first-comers argument. Realising the extent to which politico-administrative channels are pasted onto chieftaincy in Ghana, some of them also claimed autonomy in terms of chieftaincy. However, because the Government had delegated its sovereignty to the House of Chiefs which was monopolised by the existing chiefs, such requests were not successful and led to several violent confrontations.

Scholars mentioned above have shown how several such local conflicts fed conspiracy theories about an imminent large-scale confrontation between majorities and minorities. So when Konkomba settler farmers became involved as allies to the Nawuri conflicts with Gonja in 1991 and 1992, and Konkomba youth

in 1993 claimed a 'traditional area' to be carved out of the Dagomba chiefdom's east where they considered themselves indigenous, resentments simmering for a decade or so between Konkomba and Nanumba ignited early in 1994. The result was a full-fledged war between Dagomba, Gonja and Nanumba and Konkomba.

But whereas the escalation of the Konkomba/Nanumba tensions in 1994 has to be understood in the direct context of these series of conflicts, the peace process revealed profound local disjunctions. In the Gonja/Nawuri and Dagomba/-Konkomba conflicts, the so-called minorities claimed to be indigenous in eastern Gonja respectively eastern Dagomba and demanded autonomy. In the Konkomba/Nanumba case, however, Konkomba did not claim to be indigenous to the Nanumba area and hence did not claim autonomy but integration into Nanumba chieftaincy. This attempt was much bolder than in the Gonja/Konkomba case, where Konkomba settlers do not constitute a demographic majority.

With my focus on Nanun, I follow in the footsteps of the political anthropologist Peter Skalník, who conducted fieldwork in Nanun from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. Although his prime research focus was on the political structure of Nanumba, the outbreak of violence in Nanun led him to focus on what he called the 'troubled coexistence' of Konkomba and Nanumba. My scope here is explicitly on the success of the peace accord between Konkomba and Nanumba in a historical perspective, but this focus requires discussing and at times critically reworking several themes in Skalník's analysis.

In the next sections I conceptualize four themes in Skalník's analysis of Konkomba/Nanumba conflict and peace and place them in current anthropological debates. The first is the constitutional paradox that Konkomba and Nanumba are simultaneously Ghanaian citizens and subjects of chiefs and that Konkomba, as settlers by traditional definition, are degraded citizens. This tension was usually phrased in terms of ethnicity. The second theme concerns violence, or how and why Konkomba and Nanumba took the law into their own hands. According to Skalník, we have to look at the processes by which they internalised the colonial system of coercion which they put to play in the waning post-colony. The third theme is about ending the violence and solving the conflict; Skalník argued that the state misrecognised the modern dimension of apparently traditional issues and that it froze the conflict (Skalník 1983: 22; 1989: 161; 2003: 70-71), while the NGO Consortium successfully accomplished a sort of compromise. The last theme deals with the ways in which Konkomba and Nanumba themselves have tried to address their conflict issues in a non-violent way. Skalník described how both sides have tried to gather written evidence to back their claims (Skalník 2002: 165).

## Citizens, subjects and autochthony

Skalník outlined that while British colonialism allowed free settlement throughout the protectorate in which Nanun was located, it also applied indirect rule to glue each tribe to its traditional area. This colonial construction, by no means peculiar to northern Ghana (cf. Geschiere & Jackson 2006: 4), returned in the 1979 constitution which confirmed equal Ghanaian citizenship for Konkomba, while they were also confronted with a de facto secondary position as the subjects of Nanumba chiefs (Skalník 1983: 23; 1989: 164; 2002: 165; 2003: 72).

In a wider perspective, Mamdani, in his influential work *Citizen and Subject*, argued that the ‘despotic’ colonial state in Africa deliberately opposed the modern urban civilian (*citizen*), possessing individual rights according to civil law, to the rural peasant, who was *subject* to ‘customary law’ and chiefs (1996: 10, 23, 109). As he argued, customary law is not so much a set of positive rights but rather a straitjacket of naturalized customs (1996: 110; cf. Chanock 1998; Oomen 2005; Ubink 2007: 23-28). In the post-colony, this dichotomy continued to haunt African states, either in seesaw movements or in a paradoxical simultaneity (Mamdani 1996: 291; respectively 2001: 31; cf. Brempong 2003: 40). In Ghana, a certain seesaw mechanism from indirect rule (1931-1951), when Konkomba and Nanumba had no citizenship, to Nkrumah’s modernization (1951-1966), when Konkomba and Nanumba were no formal subjects of chiefs, resulted in the 1979 and post-1992 bifurcated law in which they were simultaneously citizens and subjects.

Although this double position of citizen and subject applies to both Konkomba and Nanumba in Nanun, the salience of the Konkomba case is that as subjects of Nanumba chieftaincy, they have been considered strangers, whose residency was always a privilege instead a right. Although Konkomba are just one of many groups of settlers in Nanun (see chapter two), all other groups are marginal in terms of demography and they hardly contested Nanumba privileges.

It is striking that this took such a rigid ethnic form, because both Konkomba and Nanumba generally acknowledged that their ethnicity is of recent vintage and largely emergent from their violent relationships (Skalník 1983: 25; 1987: 308; cf. Barth 1969). In a useful theory transcending primordial and instrumentalist approaches of ethnicity, Lonsdale distinguished a fixed exterior component (‘political tribalism’) from a variable moral internal component (‘moral ethnicity’). In the case of Mau Mau, a primordial facade of Kikuyu tribalism splintered behind the scene in moral struggles over what made a good Kikuyu (Lonsdale 1992: 466; cf. Ranger 1993). I follow Lonsdale’s approach because it helps to explain the seemingly paradoxical realities in which Konkomba youth wanted Nanumba to keep away from their marital disputes so that they themselves could morally intervene in these traditions; or how Nanumba youth were struggling to

modernize their customary law but suddenly enforced these customs on Konkomba when they flouted this traditional rule. As we will see in the following chapters, Youth Associations in Nanun have been central in the oscillations between internal divisions and external aggressiveness. The emphasis on ‘traditional’ issues by modernizing youth actually led to the Ghanaian state consistently misrecognizing the modernity of the Konkomba/Nanumba conflict (Skalnik 1989: 161).

Consequently, Nanumba have often discursively exploited the marks of their autochthony, especially access to earth shrines, against Konkomba. As I show below, political anthropologists such as Meyer Fortes & David Tait described how Tallensi and Konkomba political autonomy was based on the performance of earth sacrifices. Several recent studies on Volta Basin societies of Northern Ghana and Burkina Faso have shown how marks of autochthony, especially access to earth shrines and settlement histories, can be strategically used to prove autochthony, even in spite of contestable entitlements and ongoing mobility (Hagberg 1998, 2006a,b; Hagberg & Tengan 2000; Kuba 2006; Lentz 2003, 2006a,b,c; Lund 2003, 2006, 2008; Luning *et al.* 2005; Schlottner 1995, 2000). I follow this approach but also elaborate on it by investigating the relationship between such discourses and the actual performance of sacrifices in earth shrines (see chapter five).

As Geschiere and his co-authors have shown, the exclusion of strangers by ‘traditional’ criteria may enter, and erode, the realm of citizenship, through a ‘politics of belonging’ in which autochthons fearing to be outvoted by settlers pursue an agenda that one can only vote or stand candidate where one really belongs (Bayart *et al.* 2001; Ceuppens & Geschiere 2005; Geschiere & Meyer 1998; Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000; Geschiere & Jackson 2006). In an insightful publication, Geschiere & Meyer (1998) diagnosed how the 1990s upstream of political and economic liberalisation (endorsed by Bretton Woods organisations) paradoxically led to local mechanisms of exclusion based on autochthony. In chapter four I study whether these politics of belonging have challenged the peace of Nanun.

Geschiere & Nyamnjoh argued that contrary to ethnicity, which requires at least a kind of cultural or linguistic basis, discourses of autochthony are ‘a trope without a substance of its own’, and therefore display a ‘paradoxical combination of staggering plasticity and celebration of seemingly self-evident “natural givens”’ (2000: 448; cf. Geschiere & Jackson 2006: 5). Precisely the elasticity of criteria of belonging exacerbates suspicion and may motivate violence to unmask the plots of strangers (Geschiere & Jackson 2006: 6; see next section).

## Violence, sovereignty and security

How to conceptualise the Nanun violence? That the above-mentioned cluster of themes generated tensions may not be surprising but the enormous outbreak of communal violence in which neighbours started to kill each other certainly shocked the nation. Like many analysts, I found that violence evades simple definition. While some analysts defined violence as ‘physical hurt’ (e.g. Riches 1986), one may object that not all pain is violent (think of surgery, Spencer 1996) and that not all violence is physical (cf. Bourgois 2001). Part of the definition problem is that while violence may be a universal human capacity, its manifestations are contingent (Abbink 2000: xii; Robben & Nordstrom 1995: 3; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2003: 3; Whitehead 2004: 10).

While several scholars understood violence as an assault on personhood (Das 2006; Jackson 2002: 45; Scarry 1985; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois 2003: 1), such otherwise interesting analyses run the risk of dissolving violence into the wider concept of suffering. I have chosen therefore to narrow violence down to the Konkomba notion of *kijaak* and the Nanumba notion of *tobu*, both which were commonly used to describe the violence of 1981, 1994 and 1995, which imply intentional communal violent conflict and the need for ritual cleansing of the earth. These concepts exclude tension-exacerbating verbal ‘violence’ (LIK *kininkpòkpòk*; NAN *zabili*) and ‘structural violence’, which may be labelled as poverty (LIK *igiin*; NAN *fara*) or more specifically as exploitation (‘chopping’, LIK *ji*; NAN *dibu*).

Why did the *kijaak/tobu* violence break out? This question resembles that of Appadurai (1998), namely, how ethnic enmity motivates individuals to kill their neighbours or friends. Appadurai explains ethnic violence as a technique of creating certainty in the face of the changing realities of globalisation which, along similar lines as argued by Geschiere & Meyer, engender profound notions of uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> He argued that ethnic violence is a macabre technique of establishing certainty through cleansing (chasing or killing the enemy), but also a technique of ‘vivisection’, to investigate the victim’s otherness and ascertain blurry dichotomies of ethnic self and other (op. cit.: 912).

In his 2001 *When Victims Become Killers*, Mamdani brilliantly showed how such techniques of ethnic violence are linked to notions of victimhood and justification of violence. While in an influential study, Riches interpreted violence as an arena of contested legitimacy between perpetrators, victims and witnesses

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<sup>1</sup> For the impact of globalisation, see Appadurai (1996), Comaroff & Comaroff (2003), Piot (1999) and Tsing (1993, 2005).

(Riches 1986: 8),<sup>2</sup> Mamdani showed that the categories of perpetrators and victims are much more complicated. In Rwanda, both Hutu and Tutsi so-called perpetrators justified their violence by claiming to be victims of illegal suppression. This cycle of linking justice to violence could only be broken if both sides were prepared to consider themselves survivors rather than victims (Mamdani 2001: 268; see chapter three).

What is the role of the nation-state, the expected agency of legitimate violence, in such ethnic violence? Recent scholarship has described how especially in parts of Africa, state agencies may not only be incapable of maintaining the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, but also unwilling to do so because they benefit from disorder (Bayart, Ellis & Hibou 1999: 18; Chabal & Daloz 1999). This blur of war and criminality and the oft-associated political economy of greed (cf. Collier 2003) has been dubbed ‘new wars’ by some scholars (Kaldor 1999; Duffield 2001; cf. Cramer 2005; Richards 2005 for critiques). While such depictions may hold true for certain nations on the continent, the Nanun violence occurred during civil rule in Ghana. Here, it was not so much the criminalisation of the state, although people in Nanun suspected many state representatives of partiality, but rather a government deliberate inertia, caused by a dedication to the constitutional rule of law, which triggered violence. The concept of sovereignty helps to understand this. The Italian philosopher Agamben revived debates about sovereignty, mainly drawing on the work of Carl Schmitt & Walter Benjamin of the early 1920s, because Foucault’s theory of the dispersal of domination throughout society had failed to account for the legal-institutionalised exercise of power (Agamben 1998 [1995]: 11).<sup>3</sup>

In his insightful study *Performers of Sovereignty*, Hansen (2006) showed how police in post-apartheid South Africa replaced its repressive control of townships and violent hunting down of ‘terrorists’ with a visible, predictable and accountable law-preservers. However, confronted with a dramatic upsurge of crime, many citizens found that the mere presence of police patrols insufficiently provided them with a sense of security. To ensure their de facto security, entire neighbourhoods organised chartered private security agencies to arrest ‘criminals’ and beat them up before handing them over to the police. Such vigilantism breached the state monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, but it was exe-

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<sup>2</sup> Riches theory generated much debate: some scholars elaborated on the expressive features of violence (Abbink 2000: xii; Schröder & Schmidt 2001: 5) and others put question marks to the perpetrators’ instrumentality (Stewart & Strathern 2002: 7; Whitehead 2004: 58).

<sup>3</sup> Agamben recently applied Schmitt’s theory of sovereignty as the decision on the exception of law, coupled it with Foucault’s notion of ‘biopower’ as the ultimate sovereign decision over life and death and used it to interpret the Holocaust as the outlawing of Jews before mechanically exterminating them, and to draw parallels with the status of prisoners in Guantánamo Bay (Agamben 1998, 2005; cf. Das & Poole; Mbembe 2003).

cuted with impunity and as such a de facto sovereignty (cf. Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 295).

Hansen's analysis leaned on Walter Benjamin's argument in *Critique of Violence* (1921) that all law is established by means of law-making violence, after which it is canalised in predictable and procedural law-preserving violence until it becomes inert and is overthrown. A similar but more crystallised argument came from Benjamin's contemporary Carl Schmitt, who famously opened his *Political Theology* (1921) with the statement that '[s]overeign is he who decides on the exception' and 'who is responsible for deciding whether the constitution can be suspended' (1921: 7). Although sovereignty may be most visible during the suspension of civil rights by a dictatorship, Schmitt argued that constitutional routine also requires sovereign decisions.

This is relevant for the Nanun case, in which both Konkomba and Nanumba expected the government to resolve the constitutional paradox mentioned above, i.e. to make an exception by privileging one set of rights to the other. When national and regional governments declared to abide by the law in 1981, 1994 and 1995, civilians in Nanun created their own law and order to resolve the indecision of the constitutional sovereign in order to dismantle the insecurity which they suspected to breed in the other's communities.

Skalnik has argued that such Konkomba/Nanumba ethnic violence was something completely new for both. He rejected a classic distinction in political anthropology between societies such as Konkomba and Nanumba, according to which the latter were capable of coercion while the former were not. This paradigm has been paramount to political anthropology, a discipline which, according to its godfather Radcliffe-Brown, in his famous preface to *African Political Systems*, had to study 'the maintenance or establishment of social order' rather than modern government (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: xiv).

In *African Political Systems*, the editors Fortes & Evans-Pritchard sought to study 'political habits and institutions' empirically 'on an abstract plane, where social processes are stripped of their cultural idiom and reduced to functional terms' (1940: 3). On this abstract level, Fortes & Evans-Pritchard argued, all African societies were territorial and ritually stabilized political systems, but these fell in two categories due to variable ecological conditions and modes of livelihood (1940: 5-9). Social order in 'Group A' societies centred on kingship (with centralized authority, administrative machinery and judicial institutions) with significant territorial and demographic reach, while social order in egalitarian and small-scale 'Group B' depended on kinship ('segmentary lineage systems').

The editors accepted Radcliffe-Brown's position that African political systems had moral-ritual rudimentary forms of law, such as mob justice, which were

halfway between war and Western law. Rituals, Fortes & Evans-Pritchard argued (1940: 19), retained social cohesion, but while rituals in heterogeneous Group A societies generated integration and subjection, rituals in Group B societies produced fusion but especially fission or autonomy. The most important distinction between these political systems, the authors argued, lay in the exercise of force, between a coercive ‘constituted judicial machinery’ in Group A societies and, in the absence of such sovereignty, ‘the right of self-help’ in Group B (op. cit.: 13-15).

But whereas Group B societies lacked the provisional judiciary of Group A societies, all African political systems seemed to be based on what Hansen & Stepputat recently called ‘intrinsic sovereignty’ or a Durkheimian deep and implicit collective ethos which motivated everyday life and which produced social cohesion (Hansen & Stepputat 2006: 298-299). Such intrinsic sovereignty opposes to extrinsic sovereignty in the work of Schmitt discussed above, but also in the analyses of Skalník (see below).

Konkomba became a classic example of Group B societies, through the ethnography of David Tait in the 1950s. Northern Ghana became a laboratory for political anthropologists, especially Meyer Fortes and later Jack Goody and David Tait, because it was here that the two dominant types of African social organization, state and stateless, were deemed to be living side by side (Piot 1995: 2). In 1950, the Colonial Social Science Research Council funded two research projects for the two most anarchic societies of Northern Ghana, following a research agenda for anthropologists published in 1947 by Raymond Firth in *Africa*. With indirect rule running to its end, the colonial administration in Accra became more interested to see how segmented societies retained social cohesion. Jack Goody was deployed to the Lobi and David Tait, an Accra (Legon) University College lecturer with fieldwork experience among Dagomba, to the Konkomba (Goody in Tait 1961: xiii-xiv).

Although Firth had called for a practical study, Tait’s work showed structural-functionalism at its peak. The paradigmatic underpinnings of Tait become especially clear in comparison to the work of his contemporary, the French administrator Froelich, who conducted fieldwork on Konkomba from 1940-1948 and published a monograph in 1954.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Froelich’s comprehensive study held much about settlement histories, the colonial encounter, industries, adornment and belief systems. Lauding the ethnographic details of Froelich’s work, Tait, in a review, blamed Froelich for failing to analyse the political functions of these findings. However, close reading of Froelich’s work reveals that this was not an analytical shortcoming but a theoretical distinction. Accepting like Tait that Konkomba clans lived in earth shrine ‘districts’ (which he called ‘parishes’), Froelich argued that these ritual bonds had no political reality (Froelich 1954: 106). Tait’s critique reflected a profound theoretical disjunction between British and French ethnographers in Africa, embodied in Radcliffe-Brown & Griaule, whereby the former emphasized the structural function of institutions in society and the latter focused more on systems of meaning (Griaule 1948;

Like Fortes before him, Tait started with a study of the clan system (1953), followed by the analysis of household structures (1956). Additionally, he studied the functions of ritual institutions for the various levels of social organization, which was made clear in the chapter in the 1958 volume *Tribes without rulers*, which he co-edited with John Middleton and which was published after his death (Middleton & Tait 1958).<sup>5</sup>

Tait found more than a dozen Konkomba tribes glued together by territorial and linguistic proximity, face marks and ritual allegiances (1953: 220, 214). These numbers were not fixed: Fission and fusion were constants in the harsh ecological circumstances in swampy Kikpakpaan (1953: 222, 213). Due to these conditions, Konkomba major lineages seldom exceeded three minor lineages, except those clans living in the hills east and west of the river, where major lineages had more genealogical vicissitudes (1958: 177). Tait suspected similar scaling-up of Konkomba migrant communities.

In Tait's analysis, the 'clan' and its territorial 'district' were the largest Konkomba political units, although these concepts lacked a Konkomba translation (1958: 169; cf. 1953: 213). Clans were made up of major lineages (of five generations) which splintered in minor lineages (three generations) and households (1953: 213) and 'each order of segmentation has its own ritual symbol' (1958: 194).<sup>6</sup> In the absence of law proper, Tait described the Konkomba clan as 'a morally conscious body' based on 'ritual and jural activities' of an egalitarian gerontocracy of family elders (*onekpel*, better spelt *uninkpel*, pl. *bininkpiib*, in the dictionary of Langdon & Breeze 1981, which I will adhere to) (Tait 1953: 220; respectively 1958: 185-186, 188). Konkomba political clan autonomy was based on territorial earth rituals to local spirits in territorial 'districts': Descendants of the first settlers were eligible as earth priest (*otindaa*, better spelt *utindaan*) (1958: 172-173; 1953: 214).

Konkomba were not capable of organizing on a supra-tribal level, so when Dagomba, with their centralized state structure, invaded the Konkomba territories in the seventeenth century, they picked off the Konkomba 'clan by clan' (1953: 220). Because inter-tribal relationships were usually marked by a tense state of reserve, and intra-clan violence was tabooed (tensions were neutralised in joking

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Radcliffe-Brown 1940b, 1949; cf. Piot 1999: 8). Froelich & Tait never developed such enmity: In a 1962 review, Froelich praised Tait for his 'anatomic dissection of society' (1962: 176-177).

<sup>5</sup> In 1961, Jack Goody edited most of Tait's work on Konkomba (except 1954a and 1955b) in one volume, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*. The book has three parts. Part one ('The political system') is an edited version of Tait's unpublished dissertation (1952), the 1953b summary article in *Africa*, his chapter in *Tribes without Rulers* (1958) and 1953a. Part two and three are edited reprints from most of Tait's articles (respectively 1956, 1954b, 1952b, 1953c, 1955a and 1954c): Apart from style editing, Goody substituted Land shrine with earth shrine and owner of the land with owner of the earth for scholarly consistency.

<sup>6</sup> Major lineages had *dzambuna* (spelt *jabun*) shrines, minor lineages had *igi* (better spelt *nyiin*) shrines and households had *myok* (medicine) (1958: 194; see chapter five).

relations or witchcraft accusations, Tait 1954c: 68), most Konkomba communal violence were inter-clan feuds. Such feuds could be ceremonially ended between ritually obliged clans (*timantotiib*).<sup>7</sup>

Tait's early death prevented him from elaborating on his visionary observation that the 'Young Men's association' thwarted the segmentary lineage system and produced 'equality of status as warrior and dancer' (1953: 217; see chapter two). A second loose end was Tait's expectation that Konkomba social organisation changed in the settler communities of Central Ghana. He thought that there, Konkomba lost their interest in earth shrines and hence their political autonomy (1958: 170-171; see chapter five).

With Konkomba defined as a typical Group B or acephalous society, Dagomba and Nanumba were considered Group A societies, centralized around their chieftaincy. In recent years, two prominent anthropologists have tried to nuance this dichotomy without ignoring its obvious value. Working on Dagomba/Konkomba relations, Jon Kirby (2002: 14) refuted the kingship/kinship dichotomy, arguing that 'a broad range of organisational structures and institutions supporting the idea of chieftaincy exists among the non-chiefly groups', while 'a similar range of traditional institutions associated with segmentary lineage systems, which are normally identified with non-chiefly people, exists as an integral part of state systems'. However, he condoned the dichotomy of violence, by arguing that while Dagomba (who are related to Nanumba) are typically coercive 'hit people', Konkomba are autonomy-seeking 'run people'.

Peter Skalník used the Nanumba case for an altogether more substantive critique of the *African Political Systems* paradigm. As seen above, Radcliffe-Brown described political anthropology as the study 'the maintenance or establishment of social order'. The work of David Tait in the 1950s was such a fascinating analysis of Konkomba social cohesion, which was however silent about both the colonial context and his own fieldwork presence, in spite of his 'deep but unsentimental affection' for the Konkomba (Forde 1961: v). Contrary to Tait, who ignored the interaction between the political system of Konkomba and the modern colonial system, Skalník argued that the Group A and B societies of the 1940s had already been so dramatically influenced by colonialism, that the real political dichotomy was one between the coercive Western state and authoritative pre-colonial African political systems, whether Konkomba or Nanumba (1983: 11-12; 1987: 320; cf. 1986, 1989, 1996).

As Spencer argued, political anthropologists such as Tait had an 'impoverished' understanding of politics as 'the hard currency of anthropological com-

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<sup>7</sup> In such ceremonies, the elders of feuding clans dug a hole on neutral ground to bury their arrows and sacrifice on them. These ceremonies were rare but bore the administrative hopes for a peaceful Konkomba land (Cardinall 1918: 50; see chapter five).

parison' detached from culture, meaning and history (Spencer 1997: 13, 3). The first fieldwork experience of Peter Skalník among Nanumba in 1978 illustrates the collapse of this political anthropology. Hoping to gain insight in the political structure of the Nanumba 'early state', Skalník was instead confronted with the dramatic politicization of Nanumba chieftaincy in a post-colonial power vacuum. Faced with both the oversimplified representations of Group A and B societies in Tait's generation and the internalization of such ethnographic representations for local claims, Skalník drastically abandoned his theoretical paradigm (Skalník 1983: 25; see this chapter's last section).

This move exemplifies in one man's career the shake-up of political anthropology since Tait's days. Within this time-lapse, anthropologists started to realize that 'traditional' political systems in Africa could not be studied in isolation from the colonial and post-colonial context but these had to be historicized by looking at power relationships, in which political anthropologists themselves were complicit with the colonial enterprise and post-colonial powers. This critical anthropology eventually culminated in the crisis of representation in the 1980s (Asad 1973; Clifford & Marcus 1986; Fabian 1983; Said 1985 [1978]; Stocking 1991: 314-324; Wolf 1982).

Rather than showing how the potential of coercion set centralised Nanumba society apart from Konkomba, Skalník argued that Nanun was not a centralised state at all. When German troops attacked Nanun in 1896, Nanumba defended with no less than three separate armies. Nanun was 'superficially stratified'; its leadership was based on consent and voluntary tribute and hence no coercion was required (1983: 16). Skalník argued that this authoritative and non-coercive system internalised the colonial and post-colonial rule politics and eventually replaced it with the chiefs' exercise of sovereignty in 1981.

Skalník however condoned the paradigmatic distinction between Konkomba territorial rituals and Nanumba integrative rituals. He described Nanumba society as constituting various social categories (e.g. chiefs, earth priests and elders), each of which had a role to play (1983, 1987, 1996). The crucial point in Skalník's analysis is however what he called a 'politico-ritual pact' between the conqueror founder Nmantambu and the autochthonous population of Nanun (1983: 16; 1987: 309). This myth, which comes in different versions, is representative for settlement myths in chiefdoms all around the Volta Basin, from Nanun to Northern Burkina Faso. Chiefs in these places claim common descent from Gbewaa, a son or grandson of Tohazie (literally 'red hunter'),<sup>8</sup> who mi-

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<sup>8</sup> In a thorough study based on several colonial ethnographies, Benzing explained Tohazie's red colour and hunting in opposition to the indigenous 'black' farmers (Benzing 1971: 43; cf. Schlottner 1991: 156). In some versions, Gbewaa was his grandson; in those versions, Tohazie wandered to Mali, where he married a local leader's crippled daughter, who born him a son who conquered Gurma land

grated from Zamfara in the disintegrating Songhay empire of present Northern Nigeria, perhaps in the sixteenth century or earlier. He settled in Pusiga (in the north-eastern corner of Ghana) and founded a chieftaincy (*naam*) (Skalník 1978: 470, 475; cf. Benzing 1971; Iliasu 1970: 95, 98; Kawada 1977; Oppong 1973: 13; Staniland 1975: 3). The death of Gbewaa led to such competition among his descendents that they parted and founded the various chiefdoms. At least three sons of Gbewaa moved southwards, founding the Mamprugu, Dagbon and Nanun chiefdoms respectively. Although these three fraternal chiefdoms are autonomous, their paramount chiefs of Mamprugu, Dagbon and Nanun address each other as ‘my brother’ (Skalník 1987: 307; 1996: 113).

Nmantambu was allegedly sent south by his elder brother who pointed with his hand in the direction for him to go; hence the name Nanun, derived from *naa muu* (the chief’s hand) (Skalník 1979: 9; 1987: 307). He subjugated the small and dispersed Nawuri-speaking ‘autochthons’ and finally settled down in Dalaanyili (Skalník 1979: 11, 12). When Nmantambu’s son died, perhaps because he revolted against his father, Nmantambu asked the leader of Dalaanyili to bury his son (Skalník 1979: 13). After appointing his maternal nephew as his successor, from which the current chiefs descend, Nmantambu disappeared. In sum, according to Skalník, the foundation of Nanun was based on the imposition of Nmantambu’s sovereignty onto the autochthons, but the latter continued to perform ritual duties which were crucial for the continuation of the *naam* and which ‘counterbalanced’ the presumed spiritual forces of the chiefs (1983: 16; 1996: 113). I elaborate on this interpretation in chapter five.

## Peace, reconciliation and depoliticization

How to create non-violent security? This question lands us right at the centre of the problem of ‘transitional justice’ which dominates current peace studies and which roughly divides their scholarship. Adherents to the retributive justice approach hold that there can be no security, let alone peace, if perpetrators are at large (Borneman 2002; Cottingham 1979; Duvenage 1999; Widner 2001), while proponents of distributive justice, or more precisely restorative justice, believe that certainty and security cannot be imposed but only fostered in processes of reconciliation, forgiveness and healing (Abu Nimer *et al.* 2001; Amadiume & An-Na’im 2000; Amstutz 2005; Bloomfield *et al.* 2003; Galtung 2001; Lederach 1997, 2005; Zehr 2002). The Nanun peace agreements emanated from the latter.

This central dilemma of peace-building – a term with wide currency since UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali’s 1992 *Agenda for Peace* – was fed by the

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of south-eastern Burkina Faso, married an earth priest’s daughter, who born Gbewaa (cf. Benzing 1971: 44-45).

violence in Rwanda and Yugoslavia and the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa. The first two events regenerated the field of international criminal justice which had been dormant since the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials. The United Nations set up International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Court in The Hague to prosecute the leaders of war. Probably the main complicating factor for retribution is the difficulty of defining perpetrators, which in many conflicts includes tens or even hundreds of thousands of civilians (Broch-Due 2005: 3; Hutchinson 1996; Yanacopulos & Hanlon 2006: 19; Kaldor 1999). In such contexts, promising criminal justice may unleash witch-hunts on presumed perpetrators, as happened in Rwanda following the establishment of village-level *gacaca* tribunals (Mamdani 2001a, 2001b: 44; Widner 2001: 67-68).

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was installed in 1995 to deal with the atrocities under the Apartheid regime, is rather representative of 'restorative justice'. The Commission's mandate to trade amnesty for testimonies spared the country a potential civil war, but critics called the Commission's 'reconciliation' a political compromise with culprits (Bonner & Nieftagodien 2002; Duvenage 1999: 14; Mamdani 2002). Despite this criticism, the TRC became an example for similar commissions around the continent, including Ghana (Hayner 2001).<sup>9</sup>

In Ghana, government reactions to the 1981, 1994 and 1995 violence did not focus on restorative justice but were constitutionally backed peace-keeping through predictable interventions; the declaration of a state of emergency, a military intervention and the inauguration of a commission of inquiry. Assefa's mediation of the Konkomba/Nanumba conflict defied that of the government but it was no less saturated with the dilemma of transitional justice. Assefa acknowledged that 'reconciliation without addressing the injustice in the situation is indeed a mockery and belittling the suffering of the victim', but he also feared that accusations and counteraccusations would hinder post-conflict coexistence (1999, respectively 2001: 182). He therefore emphasised the forging of unity and trust (see chapter three).

Assefa called his brokerage 'consultations on development' and he considered peace and development to be intertwined. This approach has to be understood in the context of a then new development paradigm for Africa, following the end of the Cold War. A 1989 World Bank report blamed the insufficiency of economic

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<sup>9</sup> The National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), which between 2002 and 2004 investigated the atrocities during Ghana's military regimes, and recommended apologies and reparations to victims, excluded all episodes of Nanun violence, despite a petition of the Saboba paramount chief that Konkomba had been aggrieved by the 1978 Lands Commission (Ucha Bobor Borwan Kwadin IV to The Chairman, National Reconciliation Commission (10-01-2004) 'Petition of the Konkomba of Northern Region'.

liberalisation (its focus since 1981) to counter the continent's underdevelopment on a crisis of governance (The World Bank 2008). The report made it clear that many African governments were obstacles for development and hence these should adapt to 'good governance' standards, while development initiatives would by-pass the state apparatus and focus on the beneficiaries themselves. The insistence of Bretton Woods institutions on what Bayart (2000: 228) cynically called the 'Holy Trinity of Reform' (structural adjustment, democratisation and good governance) propelled a wave of democratisation through Sub Saharan Africa, including Ghana in 1992. Simultaneously, NGOs claiming to have a link with, or represent, the beneficiaries, massively stepped in the space left by state institutions to advocate community development (see chapter four).

Assefa was not so much interested in governance as in empowering communities to develop themselves. He found modernisation 'a constant source of disruption, conflict and disillusionment' and therefore advocated an economic model which 'integrates material development with social cohesion and psychological and spiritual growth' (Assefa 1996: 65, 67). He was very interested in traditions, especially chieftaincy, which he found to be 'still intact and powerful' and 'already accessible to citizens' in Ghana (1996: 58-59; 2001: 182). This approach differed substantially from that of Lederach, another influential peace mediator and scholar who worked in Northern Ghana. Rather than looking backwards to authentic traditions, Lederach, and his adherent Kirby, stressed the need for a new peace culture (see chapters six and seven).

Assefa argued that a handful of ethnic leaders abused chieftaincy for political and economic games, a process exacerbated by competitive multiparty democracy (2001: 169; cf. 1996: 53-54). Assefa aimed at the purification and empowerment of both traditional rule, followed by 'slowly infusing [traditions] with modern values of citizenship, participation, and equity' (2001: 183; cf. Voorhoeve 2007: 20; see chapters four, five and six). Assefa's approach was to recruit the unspoilt 'voices of reason' from the villages and to influence the elites through these empowered voices. However, he mistook Nanun customary law, which was the product of colonial and post-colonial political processes, for tradition. While Assefa and his team placed such traditions outside Ghana's legal order, customary law was part and parcel of the national constitution, with a sovereignty delegated by the national modern government.

In that sense, Assefa wanted to purify or depoliticize traditions. Assefa's distinction between traditional forms of administration and modern politics is at odds with the wider anthropological definitions of politics discussed above. However, in a prominent contribution to counter the threat of a conceptual impasse in political anthropology, due to the dissolution of politics in the wider notion of power, Spencer called for more attention to what people themselves

understand by politics (Spencer 1997: 13). This proposition has been reproduced in a number of fascinating ways and it brought ‘modern’ government back in research focus (Spencer 2007; cf. De Boeck 2008; Ferme 1999; Mbembe 1992, 1997; Pels 2004). I adhere to this approach because Konkomba and Nanumba notions of *polatisi* imply modern government but not traditional rule such as chieftaincy. However, in order to describe the interplay of politicization and depoliticization, especially in the context of earth rituals in chapter five, I will also resort to a wider anthropological definition of politics.

In his famous study of depoliticization, *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1990), James Ferguson aptly showed that because they were depoliticized, technocratic development projects in Lesotho had unintentional political side-effects, such as bureaucratic expansion. In other words, depoliticization can disguise political influence. But while Ferguson described these influences as unintentional side-effects of depoliticization, this study shows that tradition, which the NGO Consortium regarded as apolitical, can disguise politics. Assefa and his team did not account for the fact that although chieftaincy is a very strong symbol of tradition and social cohesion in Ghana, this country has also been associated with countless chieftaincy disputes from time immemorial (Sakyi 2003: 135; see chapter six). When Assefa claimed that traditions in northern Ghana were still strong and intact, he overlooked the hand of the state, both colonial and post-colonial, in bolstering such traditions into a bundle of contradictions, and looked for an intrinsic sovereignty.

## Silence and legalistic discourses

Although Assefa’s format for peace-building was highly successful in the Kumasi workshops, due to resources at his disposal but especially given his talent and charisma, the excessive calm in Nanun, of which the soccer match attests, challenges the outcome of his mediation. Assefa himself interpreted post-conflict calm as pathological conflict avoidance. This is an important direction in trauma studies, especially since an influential work by Scarry in 1985, in which she called trauma a universal condition of suffering beyond cultural specificity such as speech (Daniel 1996: 143; Das 2007: 10, 59, 94; Hastrup 2003; Jackson 2002; Malkki 1995: 107-108).<sup>10</sup> Muteness after violence has been well described, often in pathological terms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). There is a growing body of relevant scholarship on the cross-cultural analysis of such pathologies (e.g. Brown 2008; Wilson & So-kum Tang 2007), a discussion of which is beyond our current focus.

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<sup>10</sup> Another direction in the ethnography of trauma is the editing of experiences and memories, often described in terms of social amnesia (e.g. Borneman 2002; Buckley-Zistel 2006; Duvenage 1999) or conditioned by sentiments of shame (e.g. Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi 2007 [1963]).

These approaches would probably hold much value for understanding the behaviour and narratives of my interlocutors in Nanun. However, the oft-heard exclamation ‘I cannot speak’ rather hinted to a social incapacity to speak. Being silent, as Foucault (1990 [1976]) argued and feminist anthropology elaborated (Gal 1991; White 2000: 75; Willemsse 2001), is not necessarily the same as being mute but it can be a communicative strategy in its own right. My interlocutors often spoke of ‘the lies on the streets’, ‘streets’ referring both to everyone and everywhere, and saw truth as something precious and protected by criteria of gender, age or profession and by occasion: Palaces, court rooms or press conferences. As such, the calm soccer match was prompted by a silence: The disqualification of the football pitch as the proper (i.e. secure) site and the teams as the proper actors for addressing issues at stake, which each team among themselves freely talked about, as proved by the jokes among Konkomba about the Chamba ‘bush team’.

In an important volume on the anthropology of human rights, Wilson & Mitchell (2003: 5) diagnosed that discourses of law and rights tend to ‘operate a particular regime of truth’ and thereby produce ‘silences as well as generating and authorizing certain types of speech’. They showed that specific topics are prone to a language of rights between silence and authoritative speech, shaping vocabularies, occasions, speakers and audiences (cf. Englund 2003; Hastrup 2003: 319). The theory of Wilson & Mitchell is a suitable kick-off for thinking about the processes by which certain topics are anchored in legal formats and occasions for safe and constructive resolution. In other words, their theory invites for an emphasis on form rather than content of such topics. Geschiere and Jackson (2006) had made a similar point when they called discourses of autochthony a trope.

The dominant form of authoritative ‘speech’ in the Konkomba/Nanumba case was, and is, that of texts, for it is widely held that ‘book no lie’. During my fieldwork, *lunsi* (tom-tom beaters or oral historians) had been silenced by the District Security Council’s ‘ban on drumming’ due to the ailing security situation in a lingering Bimbilla paramount chieftaincy succession dispute, but they also sidelined themselves in the absence of a Bimbilla paramount chief. These oral historians’ silence contained a strong critique of what they considered a politicised succession dispute and of the ‘small boys’ in their families who sought the loopholes in the law to drum for the competing chiefs.

While some Nanumba chiefs said that ‘[y]ou can’t learn the tradition from schoolbooks’, the very same (illiterate) chiefs also had petitions and letters written. Among Konkomba, this generational tension has been overcome and elders massively acknowledged the relevance of education and literacy and some had their wisdom jotted down in a notebook for future generations. A study to Kon-

komba/Nanumba conflicts and peace has to go beyond the reading of the content of these piles of paper written by Konkomba and Nanumba representatives, towards an appreciation that the form and distribution of these texts have an important story to tell us (cf. Stoler 2002).

We can find the ‘book no lie’ adage in Assefa’s descriptions of the peace workshops, for ‘[t]hose who came appeared with all sorts of documents and maps, government commission of inquiry reports, investigations and findings of British and German colonial authorities, legal briefs submitted to the PPNT, and so on’ (2001: 175). Skalník (2002: 165) observed that the period after 1981 was characterised by ‘the search for words and statistics, which would give credibility to the goals of each party in the conflict’ (see chapter three).

Although the NGO peace process aimed to stop such petitioning and seek the dialogue in ‘voices of reason’, these activities do not seem to have ceased after the peace agreement and they fit Lentz’ description that throughout West Africa, representatives of both autochthones and migrants ‘arm’ themselves with written evidence, small papers in Francophone and court cases in Anglophone West Africa (Lentz 2006a: 27-29). Although written ethnic historiographies of intellectuals differed from the oral histories of village elders, Lentz argued that ‘parking’ one’s claims in court registers is a strategy similar to oral claims utterances (Lentz 1994: 463, respectively 2006a: 28). The value of Lentz’ interpretation of ‘parking’ claims for the Nanun case, is that the casting of claims at specific occasions, or being heard, was often as important having a case solved. Why such (quasi-)legalism has taken hold of Konkomba/Nanumba relationships and how these processes, rather than the latent enmity in moral disapprovals, have contributed to the escalation of simmering tensions between them will be studied in detail in chapter six. Let’s focus on the agreements in more detail now and turn to the structure of this book.

## The peace agreements and book structure

The peace agreements roughly fall apart in two sets of clauses. In order to study these, I have taken the liberty to change the sequence of the clauses. The first set of clauses (4, 9, 10, 12) deals with the Konkomba and Nanumba responsibility to build and keep their peace, from reconciliation according to their traditions to joint teams policing; decrying ethnic language and arms trafficking and stockpiling, educating their communities about peaceful conduct and bringing war-mongers to book. I study the effect of this responsibility in the Chamba dispute in chapter six. The second set of clauses contain the actual peace deal emanating from clause one (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11). The vocabulary of these clauses testifies to this: Note below the use of words like ‘recognised’, ‘eligible’ and ‘due process’.

The profound ethnic level of agreement is surprising given the above stipulations about the abstinence from ‘ethnicizing’.

The peace accord was a successful agreement that Konkomba accepted to be subjects of Nanumba traditional authorities and in return, Nanumba accepted to coexist with Konkomba. This agreement is significant because Konkomba had previously rejected the authority of Nanumba chiefs and even killed a number of them, while Nanumba repeatedly called for all Konkomba to leave Nanun. They agreed not only to coexist on these terms but also to abstain from accusations of exploitation, because they would be ‘brothers in development’. In return for accepting their subject position to Nanumba authorities, Nanumba opened the lowest level of their chieftaincy to Konkomba headmen so that a kind of integration became possible.

The peace deal unfolds in the realm of Nanun tradition as it is supposedly represented in Nanun customary law and usage. Above, in our discussion of Mamdani’s *Citizens and Subjects*, we have seen the error in equating traditions with customary law. Customary law is the delegated sovereignty of the state and it is based on autochthony, because it is Nanumba customary law and not that of Konkomba. However, having confirmed the Nanumba privileges in terms of landownership, spiritual access to the land and paramount chieftaincy, Konkomba would be allowed to integrate into the lower levels of chieftaincy as headmen and be represented in the Nanumba Traditional Council which regulates land tenure. The main deal, and its goal, was summarised in clause one:

‘Nanumbas, who are indigenous and sole owners of the land in Nanun, do recognise the Konkombas as an important non-Nanumba community and brothers in development who seek the well-being of the district and whose status, duties and obligations are traditionally recognised and defined under Nanun customary law and usage’ (clause 1).<sup>11</sup>

Four clauses explicitly addressed Nanumba rights, regarding the entitlement to, and the protection of, land. Two of them focused on land ownership and paramount chieftaincy: Clause five declared the Bimbilla Naa as the undisputed ‘paramount chief and allodial owner of all land in Nanun’ and clause six guaranteed that paramount chieftaincy is ‘the preserve of eligible Nanumba’. Another two dealt with the protection of land: Clause seven entitled the Nanumba Traditional Council as the legitimate body to regulate land tenure and settlement patterns ‘for purposes of preservation of the ecology for future generations’. Clause eight also dealt with the protection of land, but now with regard to its spiritual dimensions. It declared that ‘Customary pacification in respect of river gods, land

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Kumasi accord on peace and reconciliation between the various ethnic groups in the Northern region of Ghana’ (31-02-1996).

gods and grooves [sic] should only be performed by the recognised land and fetish priests or Tindanas of Nanun’.

The status of Konkomba in Nanun had been recognised: They were entitled to equal ‘modern’ administrative and political representation and they were accepted as ‘brothers in development’. But the agreements went further than that and here we touch on the intriguing core of the peace deal. Clause eleven stipulated that Konkomba and Nanumba would together find a ‘satisfactory’ solution for the status of Konkomba ‘self-styled chiefs’ while clause seven agreed to Konkomba representation in the Nanumba Traditional Council. The crucial deal for both was specified in clause two:

‘Konkombas shall be allowed to freely choose their headmen to be blessed by the Bimbilla-Naa or his delegated divisional authority provided this will not conflict with the interest of the Bimbilla-Naa and/or the Princes of Nanun’ (clause 2).

This clause will be central to this study, because it encapsulates the biggest challenge for today’s peace in Nanun: What if a freely chosen Konkomba chief is not acceptable to the Nanumba chiefs? Who has the power of decision in such a situation? This became very urgent in Chamba town, when the Konkomba community leader died in 1996 and the Nanumba chief asked the Konkomba community (which dominates Chamba) to choose a new leader to be officially installed as a headman or sub-chief. But as Konkomba chose their candidate, the Nanumba chief supported another, unpopular, Konkomba candidate. The case, which nearly escalated into violence in 2002, while I was in the field, became the litmus test for Nanun’s peace accord.

Hundreds of Konkomba and Nanumba youth went to the streets, armed with sticks, machetes and guns. The anger of many local Konkomba that Nanumba wanted to impose a leader on them, and the local Nanumba sentiment that Konkomba undermined the authority of the chief, drew the attention of the Konkomba and Nanumba youth associations – the officious mouthpieces of the ethnic groups – and both wrote inflammatory memos, reminding each other of the second clause in the 1996 peace agreement. The tensions subsided over 2003 but reignited when the Nanumba chief died in late 2006, again while I was in the field. Rumours quickly spread around Ghana that the Konkomba/Nanumba conflict was about to flare up again and the tensions resulted in a set of renewed commitments to the Kumasi Accord in 2007.

Studying the Chamba dispute was like looking at Konkomba/Nanumba post-1996 coexistence through a magnifying glass, as it brought almost all peace clauses, and apparently the insufficiencies of some of them, into play. The dispute provides an excellent case for studying the ways in which the consensual peace deal generated a stalemate in Chamba, oscillating between silence, threats of violence and processes legalistic petitions.

This book roughly falls apart in two halves: An analysis of the 1996 peace deal, as the chronological end of a Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence from its beginning in 1931 in chapters two and three, followed by an analysis of the resolution of tensions in the post-1996 period in chapters four, five and six, and ending up with conclusions in chapter seven.

Chapter two studies the coexistence of Konkomba and Nanumba from its first record in 1931 until the eve of their first violent conflict in 1981. These were fifty years in which Nanun transformed from a remote place in a British mandate where nothing ever seemed to happen to Ghana's hotbed of violence. It is a history of development, ethnic emancipation and overcoming backwardness by condoning some traditions and repressing others, from the point when a British administrator complained that the people he spoke to in Nanun were silent and hindered by taboos to the moment that ethnic youth associations claimed to speak on their ethnic groups' behalf. In sum, chapter two studies the background to clause nine about not ethnicizing individual criminal behaviour: How and why did Konkomba and Nanumba come to consider themselves victims of the ethnic other's violation of the law? As such, this chapter studies the theoretical debates raised above in the section on citizens, subjects and autochthony.

Chapter three continues the chronology of Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence, from the first violence in 1981 to the signing of the peace accord in 1996, a history of escalation and de-escalation. This chapter tries to understand how and why communal violence erupted and how it stopped. It looks in particular at the relation between violence and silence in the context of clauses four and twelve on 'traditional' reconciliation and security. As such, this chapter addresses the theoretical debates of violence, sovereignty and security and peace, reconciliation and security.

Chapters four and five investigate the realm of traditional and modern development and politics. Chapter four looks at the impact of 'modern' politics, both the legislature and executive, on Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence. Konkomba are an electoral majority and Nanun has experienced several key elections and decentralisations in the past years but these do not seem to have triggered the tensions which Assefa expected. This chapter therefore departs from clause three, which stipulated that political and administrative representation at decision-making processes would be 'by merit and following due process'. I start the chapter with an analysis of the demographic make-up of Chamba and western Nanun and how Konkomba became an electoral majority, followed by the analysis of recent elections and administrative adjustments in this part of Nanun. This chapter deals with theories of politics and depoliticization outlined above.

At a certain point in the Chamba dispute, one of the Konkomba candidates asked the Nanumba chief in town to let peace return by performing a sacrifice to

the local earth shrine. The chief refused to give such an order to the earth priest because he found the request a provocation. In chapter five, I study why the chief reacted in this manner and how earth sacrifices symbolise mutual Konkomba/Nanumba accusations of exploitation and destruction. I will seek to show that one of the most undisputed marks of authority, ritual sanctions of the earth cult, have in fact been at the basis of processes of escalation. Linking this complicated topic to mutual stereotypes about destruction of the land, this chapter addresses clauses seven and eight on ecological protection and earth sacrifices respectively.

Chapter six studies the Chamba dispute in detail from its beginning, two months after the signing of the Kumasi Accord in 1996, until its escalation in 2002, followed by an analysis of another cycle of escalation and de-escalation between 2005 and 2007. Using clause two as a thread, the main question is why choosing a Konkomba headman is so problematic, and especially why finding a solution for the stalemate has been so difficult. Who has the sovereignty to resolve this case? As we will see, this question is crucial for Konkomba/Nanumba peace at large. Studying this case in the wider context of chieftaincy disputes in Nanun, I arrive at an analysis which deals with most themes introduced in this chapter, particularly with the ways in which autochthony discourses invoke requests for sovereign decisions and so produce an ominous calm and threats of violence. After a meticulous analysis of the Chamba case, we can draw conclusions in chapter seven about the success of the peace accord and whether the soccer match symbolised a fragile peace or a robust peace in Nanun.

### In and after the field: Presence and representation

The obsession with texts and written evidence among the inhabitants of Nanun was epistemologically interesting but also methodologically challenging. Apart from the important ethnographic work of Skalník, mostly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, not much ethnographic fieldwork has been conducted in Nanun. With the generous help of Jon Kirby and Peter Skalník, I was in the field three times, for a total of sixteen months between 2002 and 2007, in and around Chamba and Bimbilla (August 2002-January 2003; March-September 2005 and August 2006-January 2007). I spent some time in Kikpakpaan and several weeks in archives on a district level (Bimbilla), regional level (Tamale) and national level (Accra). Although I always worked with translators, I spent several months learning Likpakpaln to a working level, and to a much lesser extent also Nanunli.

In the field, I got into processes which started before my fieldwork and continued afterwards, but within the given time frame I had the chance of observing several crucial events described in this book, including the Chamba events of 2002 and 2006. Expecting my neutrality to be negated during such events, I was

surprised to find it actually imposed on me. I was worried that my interlocutors would try to ‘seduce’ me to consent (Robben 1995), interpret my encouraging ‘silent’ and ‘uh-huh’ probes (Bernard 1995: 215, 217) as consent and that my pursuit of research neutrality was continuously subverted by my empathy towards the people I worked with (Sluka & Robben 2007: 22-23; cf. Kleinman & Kleinman 1997; Das & Kleinman 2001; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Scheper Hughes 1992). While this dilemma may seem to be a point of departure for contemplating ethical codes for ethnographic fieldwork, the tension between the pursuit of scientific objectivity and empathy towards the people in the field cannot be disentangled from the very basis of ethnographic methodology and often requires context-specific negotiations (Meskell & Pels 1999; Pels 1999; Pels & Salemink 1999: 35).

But what if empathy and objectivity coalesce in the interlocutors’ expectations? People in the field came to know me as that man who wanted to learn the culture and history of Nanun and who, to that end, went round to listen from all sides and see for himself. I have been responsible for this image from day one but this fieldwork strategy was also in line with the role of ethnographic ‘evidence’ in the local legalistic discourse. In 1994, the Nanumba Youth Association wrote that:

‘As is widely known and confirmed by independent research (Prof. David Tait 1958, 1961, Skalnik 1958, 1986, 1987, 1989) the Konkomba farmers started to settle in Nanung as refugees only from the 1940’s onwards after they had killed the Zagbli-Lana [Dagomba Chief] and they were received well by the Nanumbas’.<sup>12</sup>

In 1997, a Konkomba lawyer also referred to Tait, albeit in different tenor:

‘Dr Tate [sic] in his book entitled the Konkomba of Northern Ghana paragraph 1 page 12 says: The Konkomba settled in small communities that stretched over the whole of former Northern Togoland. He like Professor A.A. Boahen agree that the entire Oti basin, because of its fertility has been in full occupation of the Konkombas since the 15<sup>th</sup> century’.<sup>13</sup>

Ferguson, in his research on the Zambian Copperbelt, found that erstwhile modernization theory had been internalized by the local people he encountered. Classic ethnography in the Copperbelt had moved from being a record to an ethnographic artefact because ‘theories originally conceived as external to the social reality they sought to account for have themselves become [...] ethnographic objects’ (Ferguson 1999: 15-16). Skalnik recently reflected on the authoritative position of ethnography and noted that the dichotomy between cen-

<sup>12</sup> Na Gbantohgu *et al* On behalf of Bimbilla-Na and Nanumba Youth Association (23-09-1994) ‘Response to the ‘Konkomba Position paper of conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana with reference to Nanumba-Konkomba Conflicts Presented to the Permanent Negotiating Team, September 1994’.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Lawyer Jacob Jejeti on behalf of Konkomba Chiefs in Nkwanta District to The Permanent Peace Negotiation Team’ (06-01-1998).

tralised and acephalous tribes, ‘first offered by the colonial administrators and later corroborated by anthropologists – has been internalised by both African intellectuals and the general public’, in spite of the current unpopularity of this dichotomy in anthropology (Skalnik 2003: 70).

So when my interlocutors said ‘I can’t wait to read your book’, this flatter was eclipsed by tensions between the presence of the people I worked with and how to represent their case (Fabian 1990: 769). For me, it engendered doubts about my expertise (Ferguson 1999; cf. Clifford & Marcus 1986), fear for disappointment about my representation of the complexities I sought to describe (Das 2007: 2; Robben & Nordstrom 1995: 15) and nervousness about what local leadership would use my findings for (Brettell 1993; Caplan 2003:23 ff.; Scheper Hughes (2000). While most people I worked with thought that my research would reveal ‘the facts’, and coupled my witnessing to their testifying, my work was about dismantling such ontological aspirations and trying to represent the ways in which facts fractured. Eltringham’s work on the methodological and ethical challenges of representing the Rwandan genocide helped me with this approach. He proposed to give voice to confusion rather than a sanitised meta-narrative:

‘Conflict is ultimately about disagreement. To properly understand conflict we must give voice to these disagreements and demonstrate how they are articulated. From such a perspective, disagreements about the nature and ‘truth’ of conflicts have less to do with the sanitised, objective and inevitable progression of ‘facts’, than they do with an informed engagement with the confused and confusing words of discursive strategies, partial ‘truths’ and conflicting subjectivities’ (Eltringham 2003: 109).

How to represent confusion without being confused yourself? Like Ferguson in a Copperbelt in crisis, I found that my interlocutors’ messy answers inflicted confusion on me, resulting in ‘a situation where “the natives” as well as the ethnographer lack a good understanding of what is going on around them’ (Ferguson 1999: 19). Analyses of the events I witnessed should not be mistaken for testimonies. From these challenges emerged a casuistic approach, centred on the Chamba dispute. I reflect on this choice in chapter seven.

## ‘Ethnicizing individual criminal behaviour’ (1931-1981)

*‘We agree to refrain from the practice of ethnicizing individual criminal behaviour; that is, for blaming an entire ethnic group for the criminal conduct of an individual who is a member of that ethnic group’ (clause 9).*

### Introduction

The Chamba dispute briefly described in the previous chapter showed how quickly a local dispute about Konkomba village leadership escalated to an ethnic level. As I will show in chapter six, this dispute eclipsed internal Konkomba and Nanumba divisions about Konkomba leadership. In the words of Lonsdale (see chapter one), Konkomba and Nanumba internal moral ethnicities became eclipsed by an external political tribalism. To understand this potential, in spite of the peace agreement clauses eleven and which tackle the tensions around Konkomba leadership and prevent the habit of ‘ethnicizing’ individual cases, we have to historicize both the headmen topic and Konkomba/Nanumba ethnicity. In so doing, we will see how Konkomba and Nanumba ethnic emancipation intersected with the privileges Nanumba claimed as autochthons in Nanun and the equal citizenship rights which Konkomba stood for, which culminated in the 1981 violent conflict and which continues to challenge Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence to date.

This chapter seeks to trace the lead-up to the first violent confrontations of Konkomba and Nanumba, roughly from the first record of their coexistence in 1931 in a dull corner of a British mandated area, the peaceful conditions of which

attracted so many Konkomba farmers, to the explosion of violence which shook the independent nation of Ghana fifty years later. Although this historiography shows that Konkomba/Nanumba rarely lived together as a happy family, it also resists the argument that violent conflict was the inescapable result of this coexistence. It struck me that the lead-up to violence had been only years in the coming and not decades, as many Konkomba and Nanumba post-1981 representations of their pre-1981 coexistence suggested (see chapter three).

Although the unrecorded settlement of Konkomba yam farmers in Nanun started on a small scale a decade earlier, 1931 certainly was a benchmark in the history of Konkomba/Nanumba relations. It was in this year that Nanun, for the first time, came under the explicit attention of the colonial administration through the research of colonial administrator Amherst into the customs of Nanun to benefit the implementation of indirect rule in 1933. In his 'constitution', Amherst fixed the Nanumba 'Native Authority' at the precise moment of what was arguably the biggest change it was confronted with: The settlement of thousands of Konkomba farmers.

Significant in Amherst's intervention is also that he complained about the lack of local voices due the lack of educated natives and the taboos and ignorance of his interlocutors. Fifty years later, however, this alleged lack of voice had given way to the claims of educated Konkomba and Nanumba youth who were acting as self-proclaimed ethnic spokesmen with a moral authority. This chapter therefore not only focuses on the emergence of the conflict repertoires in Nanun but also on the local processes of gaining voice. While in 1931, 'Konkomba' and 'Nanumba' were labels pasted onto loosely related peoples by outsiders such as Amherst, these ethnicities had become political realities by 1981.

Studying the interplay of the registers of citizenship and customary law in Konkomba and Nanumba claims requires repeated referrals to national events as well as changes in the Konkomba 'homeland' of Kikpakpaan and the Dagomba district from which both Nanun and Kikpakpaan were most of the time administered. Analysing the transformations which took place between 1931 and 1981 also requires a meticulous description of several crucial events in and around Nanun in the preceding period between 1874 and 1931. Although such an exercise may appear to be far-fetched, scrutinising these periods is relevant for understanding the historiographies of Konkomba and Nanumba and their subsequent claims. Many Konkomba and Nanumba I spoke to had a big interest in 'German archives' because they thought that the Germans found northern Ghana in its original state.

## Early expeditions and the German period (1874-1914)

In January 1890, Nanun came in direct contact with the colonial world as the German Hauptmann E. Kling travelled through Bimbilla.<sup>1</sup> He conducted meteorological measurements and left. Six years later, in 1896, Nanun lost its sovereignty to Germany, after having been placed in a colonial 'Neutral Zone'.

Although Europeans had had trading posts on the Gold Coast since the late fifteenth century, they had no interest in moving inland until the nineteenth century. Trade centred on gold and especially slavery, through which Nanun was indirectly (via Asante and Gonja) linked to the coastal forts. After the abolition of slavery in the early nineteenth century, the British – who had come to dominate the coastline – effectively colonised the Gold Coast, but they failed to incorporate the Asante chiefdom north of the Gold Coast until 1896. However, Asante was seriously weakened after a lost battle with the British in 1874 and this gave European explorers access to the 'Ashanti hinterlands', which had paid tribute to Asante since the mid-eighteenth century (e.g. Benzing 1971: 183).

Colonial interests in Nanun were however very limited. Initial European expeditions focused on the Gonja/Hausa market of Salaga, sixty kilometres west of Bimbilla and a former part of Nanun, until Gonja invasions in the seventeenth century (Benzing 1971: 139-140, Tamakloe 1931; Zech 1904: 118).<sup>2</sup> According to Asante stories, Salaga was very rich and estimated to receive around 10,000 traders a day (Olorumfemi 1984: 19). In order to avoid colonial confrontations, and particularly to outwit French expeditions from the Senegal coast, the British and Germans (who had colonised the Togo coast) demarcated a Neutral Zone in 1887-8 around Salaga (Arhin 1974: xvi). Although off the main caravan route between Salaga and Yendi, Nanun became entirely located in this zone.<sup>3</sup>

But the agreement notwithstanding, the German Kurt von Francois made several friendship treaties with chiefs in the Neutral Zone in 1888 (Arhin 1974: 90; Ladouceur 1979: 39).<sup>4</sup> In 1892, the British colonial government in Accra responded by sending the 'native' (Gold Coast) diplomat George Ekem Ferguson (1865-1897) upcountry to sign trade treaties with the 'kings' in the north (Arhin 1974: xvii). After signing a treaty with the Dagomba 'king' in Yendi north of Nanun, Ferguson travelled to Bimbilla only because the area north of Yendi was unsafe. In the company of prominent chiefs and elders, Ferguson and Bimbilla

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<sup>1</sup> MFGS 1893: 249-250, Hauptmann E. Kling & Dr. R. Büttner 'Ergebnisse der Forschungsreisen im Hinterlande von Togo 1890 bis 1892'.

<sup>2</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/30/1 DC Eastern Dagomba (Gilbert) (1930) 'A brief history of the Nanumba tribe'.

<sup>3</sup> MFGS 1888: 142-143, 'Übersichtskarte von dem Hinterlande des Deutschen Schutzgebietes Togo nach den Aufnahmen von C. von Francois'.

<sup>4</sup> MFGS 1888: 31 and MFGS 1888: 143-182, 'Bericht des Hauptmann von Francois über seine Reise im Hinterlande des deutschen Schutzgebiets Togo'.

Naa Al Belsi signed a ‘friendship’ treaty on 26 August 1892 (Arhin 1974: 90). The Germans were annoyed when they heard that Ferguson had distributed British flags to the chiefs and sent Lieutenant R. Klose to Salaga in October 1894 (Trierenberg 1914: 16; 23-25; Staniland 1975: 9).

Klose however found that after a ravaging civil war, Salaga had virtually ‘ceased to exist’ (Brimah & Goody 1967: 169; Klose 1992 [1899]). As a transition point where kola nuts from Asante were traded with cattle and slaves from the Sahel, the Ashanti hinterlands had no inherent wealth. Once cut off from Asante markets in 1874, this mercantile system collapsed, resulting in a politico-mercantile vacuum, which also plunged Dagbon, Mamprugu and Nanun into chaos (Olurumfemi 1984: 20; cf. Arhin 1974: 90; Brukum 1999: 105; Cornevin 1962: 57; Staniland 1975: 9). But although the Neutral Zone was fraught with colonial disappointment, the British, Germans and French unleashed a race for the Zone’s strategic geographic location.

In November 1894, a *Grosse Togo-Hinterlandexpedition* led by Dr. Grüner started in Kete Krachi, just south of the Neutral Zone.<sup>5</sup> Like Salaga, Kete Krachi had been loosely part of Nanun, probably until the Asante attacks on Nanun in the early nineteenth century (Zech 1904: 121). In 1881, the British delegate Lonsdale visited Kete Krachi to successfully encourage trade here to bypass the chaos of Asante and Salaga (Maier 1980: 39). Its growth resulted in such an influx of Grushi slaves from the Upper North of Ghana, to grow yams for consumption, that a British diplomat reckoned the Kete Krachi area in 1887 as ‘the highest cultivated part of West Africa’ (op. cit.: 47). The unbridled growth of Kete Krachi had fuelled power struggles between a local chief priest and Hausa traders. The latter successfully rallied the support of Grüner, who executed the priest and opened a German station early 1895 (op. cit.: 40, 43).<sup>6</sup> Kete Krachi’s yam economy – and especially its collapse in the 1920s – was an important factor for Konkomba migration to Nanun (see below).

After opening the Kete Krachi station, the German expedition entered the Neutral Zone, to find Salaga waving the Union Jack. They rushed to the Dagomba capital Yendi where they successfully made a treaty with the Ya Na king in January 1895 and with the Chakosi chief at Sansanne Mango, northeast of the Neutral Zone (Trierenberg 1914: 78). Grüner returned to Kete Krachi via Bimbilla, but showed no interest in making a treaty with the Bimbilla Naa.<sup>7</sup> However, Nanun gained importance in the subsequent years, as it became apparent that the

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<sup>5</sup> MFGS 1898: 235-239, Sprigade P. ‘Begleitworte zu der Karte des nördlichen Theiles des Schutzgebietes Togo und seine Hinterländer’.

<sup>6</sup> DK 1896: 45.

<sup>7</sup> MFGS 1898: 235-239, Sprigade P. ‘Begleitworte zu der Karte des nördlichen Theiles des Schutzgebietes Togo und seine Hinterländer’.

Neutral Zone would be divided in a British western part and a German eastern part and Grüner hoped to divert the main caravan routes eastwards via Bimbilla.

In 1896, while a German station was opened in Sansanne Mango, north of the Neutral Zone, the area between the Krachi and Mango stations was far from secure. First, there were rumours about a French expedition from the Dahomey coast heading for Mango (Trierenberg 1914: 16, 24). Second, the people living between the two stations, Konkomba and Dagomba, regularly attacked German messengers to sell them as slaves (Trierenberg 1914: 113). In order to secure (the route to) Mango, Dr. Grüner led an expedition of close to one hundred soldiers and almost triple that number of carriers from Krachi. The below chronology, which is adapted from Trierenberg (1914: 115-137), shows the imposition of a colonial sovereignty.

On 27 November 1896, Grüner sent a message to the chief of the Nanumba town of Wulensi, asking for safe passage, but access was denied. According to Nanumba memories, the German request for passage confronted Nanumba with a dilemma. If they refused passage, the Germans would fight them but if they allowed German passage, Dagomba would feel betrayed and punish them; moreover, who guaranteed that the Germans would not fight them after dealing with Dagomba? Nanumba chiefs and elders – so the story goes – had no option but to fight the Germans. The next day, the German expedition found Wulensi and Nakpayili deserted, but their messengers to Bimbilla were attacked on the way (Tamakloe 1931: 42). In the early morning of 30 November, the expedition reached Bimbilla which they also found deserted, but when they randomly shot into the thick grasses east of town, a battle with Nanumba hiding there started. In the afternoon a stronger army of some 1500 attacked from the north and the Germans killed more than hundred of them, after which they burnt down Bimbilla. Bimbilla Naa Al Belsi escaped the Germans and fled to Chamba (Tamakloe 1931: 42). The expedition members were in a hurry to reach Mango and decided to deal with the Nanumba later.

On 4 December, the German expedition faced fierce resistance in the Dagomba village of Adibo just south of Yendi. An estimated 7000 warriors – including many Konkomba – attacked the Germans from all sides. At least 430 Dagomba, three German soldiers and a German police officer were killed before Yendi could be defeated. Grüner and his team rushed to Mango through the Konkomba land, but they took their time to burn every Konkomba village on the way. The team secured their Mango station a week later, a mere two weeks ahead of the French expedition. But while they were in Mango, the Dagomba Ya Na Andani gave the message that his troops were waiting to fight them, and the weakened German expedition escaped via the recently opened eastern station of Bassari, fighting through Konkomba roadblocks (Trierenberg 1914: 138, 143).

There are no indications that Nanun was the site of any further resistance to German colonialism but that was different for Konkomba and Dagomba. When Konkomba attacked German troops near Bassari, officer Von Massow launched a punitive expedition in which he systematically burnt all Konkomba villages and farms and seized their cattle in December 1897 and January 1898 (Trierenberg 1914: 150, 154; Cornevin 1959: 698). Similar penal expeditions were organised in Kikpakpaan between 1898 and 1900 – killing one thousand Konkomba warriors in the village of Iboubou alone (Froelich (1954: 4) – to make German control somewhat effective in the Konkomba area (Trierenberg 1914: 160-162; 191; see also Cornevin 1959: 699; Froelich 1954: 34; Tcham 1994).<sup>8</sup>

In 1899, the British and Germans agreed on the Daka River as dividing line between their protectorates in the Samoa Treaty,<sup>9</sup> but the death of the Dagomba ‘king’ later that year led to various Dagomba families feuding for succession. The division of Dagbon in a British and German part complicated issues, and when Dagomba kingmakers installed the chief of Savelugu, in British territory, the Germans killed him and replaced him with the chief of Karaga (Ferguson & Wilks 1970: 345), after which they raised the German flag in Yendi early May 1900 (Staniland 1975: 63).

After 1900, the Germans continued to need a lot of coercion to control Northern Togo. They however had big plans for Northern Togo, where they had found local traditions of cotton-growing which could benefit German industries. Residents in Northern Togo had to offer twelve days of labour and unwilling Konkomba villages were subjected to a policy of ‘labour with hunger’ (Gehrts 1915: 129; Tamakloe 1931: 59). Largely due to lack of (dedicated) labour, the cotton programme, which started around 1902, failed altogether and it was virtually non-existent ten years later.<sup>10</sup>

But the German emphasis on labour had two main consequences for Konkomba and Nanumba. First, chiefs were charged to recruit labour: Nanumba chiefs had to recruit labour but when Bimbilla Naa Salifu’s efforts were unsatisfactory, he was removed from the skin, banned to Krachi, and replaced by the former chief’s son Mahini. In Konkomba villages, headmen were installed to recruit labourers (Cornevin 1954; Froelich 1954: 22; Trierenberg 1914: 188). Second, in the pursuit of labour, infrastructural projects targeted densely populated areas. So while large parts of scarcely populated southern Nanun were declared a nature reserve in 1913,<sup>11</sup> there were serious plans to extend the south-

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<sup>8</sup> DK 1899: 313; DK 1901: 111; Gehrts (1915: 234).

<sup>9</sup> DK 1899: 803-805.

<sup>10</sup> DK 1902: 556; DK 1911: 232; DK 1912: 453.

<sup>11</sup> DK 1913: 844, ‘Bekanntmachung des Gouverneurs von Togo, betr. Einrichtung von Wildschongebieten’ (26-07-1913).

ern railway between Lomé and Atakpamé to densely-populated Saboba.<sup>12</sup> These plans coincided with a relaxation of German administration in Northern Togo and the access granted to missionaries in 1910 and an ethnographic film crew in 1913, both of which gave accounts of admiration of Konkomba as noble savages, versus Dagomba as crumbling suppressors,<sup>13</sup> evaluations which British and French administrators copied.

### Order and migration (1915-1931)

When the First World War broke out, some of the first gunshots were heard in Northern Togo, where Germany had built the world's largest wireless radio station. To deactivate this station, British troops from the Gold Coast and French troops from Dahomey successfully invaded Northern Togo in August 1914, capturing German administrators and missionaries as prisoners of war.<sup>14</sup> The western part of Togo, including Nanun, Dagbon and western Kikpakpaan, was occupied by the British and the east by the French; a division formalised in 1917 as League of Nations mandates and, with some adjustments, confirmed in 1929.

The British encounter with the Asante hinterland had been fraught with disappointment and consequent neglect. According to the Colonial Office in Accra, the so-called Northern Territories lagged fifty years behind the Gold Coast and Ashanti colonies (Staniland 1975: 55) and their only value was to facilitate the

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<sup>12</sup> DK 1914: 508.

<sup>13</sup> The German mission doctor Fisch travelled through Northern Togo in 1910 in search of suitable place for a Basel Mission station. Reaching Nanun in February, he was impressed by the chiefs' palaces and the yam economy, but he was particularly touched by the Nanumba, whom he described as 'friendly, trustworthy people ... with open faces' (Fisch 1911: 48, 51, my translation). Travelling on, Fisch found 'fewer open, honest faces' in Dagomba and of the Ya Na, he said that 'not only has his empire fallen but he is a ruin himself too' (op. cit.: 52, my translation). In the Konkomba area, he saw naked and drunk people, but 'the courage, joy of living and zeal twinkled from their faces and their entire presence' (op. cit.: 147). In the end, one Otto Schimming opened a Basler Mission station in the most accessible town of Yendi. Three years after Fisch, the German filmer Major Hans Schomburgk asked the 22-year-old Hamburg-based Meg Gehrts for the leading role in the drama movie *The White Goddess of the Wangora* (1914), with a script reminiscent of H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1889 [1885]). After shooting the film, they travelled upcountry to the Konkomba country. In a very readable travelogue on which I hope to elaborate elsewhere, Gehrts wrote that she was 'greatly struck with their appearance. Tall, splendidly proportioned, and of fierce and warlike aspect, they carried themselves with a grace and dignity one could not help admiring' (Gehrts 1915: 116). Gehrts' romantic idea of Konkomba was however put to a test when Konkomba warriors were asked to talk, so that Schomburgk could record their facial expressions. The silent film (*Im deutschen Sudan*, 1914) shows these men talking and laughing plenty. When Gehrts asked the translator what these 'unspoilt children of nature' were saying, she got the reply that 'most of the messages were of such a character that they would not bear being repeated' (1915: 218). She argued that the only reason why they served under Dagomba, was because the latter had guns (1915: 214-215).

<sup>14</sup> DK 1915: 27; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/497/n.n. 'Annual Report of the Commandant Northern Territories Constabulary on the two platoons of that force in occupation in the British Mandated Territory of Togoland, for the Periods 1st April 1923 to 31st March 1924 and from 1st April 1924 to 30th September 1924'.

turbulent economic development of the Gold Coast and Ashanti colonies with labour. Missions had restricted access to the protectorate (Ladouceur 1979: 58; Bening 1990, 1999) and in 1922, the Northern Territories were declared public lands, in order not to protect the southern property market and to discourage any economic initiative which could compromise the north function as labour reserve (Brukum 1999: 121; Konings 1984: 7; Lund 2008: 26). Thousands of labourers from densely populated and infertile parts of the north were assigned to the plantations and mines in the south and although some Nanumba were enrolled very few Konkomba were, probably because Dagomba chiefs feared recruiting them.<sup>15</sup>

The unification of Dagbon under the Union Jack in 1915 gave impetus to an administrative agenda of trying to undo the chaotic years of warfare, slave-raiding and the colonial competition in the former Neutral Zone. This idea of a pre-colonial order and its possible reconstruction was the key to British colonial administration in Nanun and beyond (Lentz 1994; Pels & Saleminck 1999: 25, 27; Ranger 1997 [1983]: 604), even if such an order was fictional, since this part of West Africa had been very unstable for centuries, due to slave-raiding and Asante imperialism (Benzing 1971: 36; Tamakloe 1931: 45).

The first British step to restoration in Nanun – which ceased to be a nature reserve – was the 1915 reinstatement of Bimbilla Naa Salifu, who had been toppled by the Germans.<sup>16</sup> Second, the British united Nanun, which had been divided over the two German administrative areas of Bassari and Krachi, under the latter in 1917.<sup>17</sup> Third, in 1921, Governor Guggisberg envisaged the development of three or four strong native states in the Northern Territories (Gonja, Dagbon and Mamprugu), which would usurp not only the non-centralised societies such as Konkomba but also the smaller centralised polities, like Nanun, eventually forcing them into one northern nation similar to the Asante Confederacy (Lund 2008: 38; Staniland 1975: 58; Talton 2003a: 96). As a first move towards this, Nanun was transferred from Krachi to Yendi district in 1922, in spite of Nanumba objections because they feared to lose three villages to Dagomba which had been given to them during German rule.<sup>18</sup> As a compromise,

<sup>15</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211/n.n. DPO (31-12-1915) 'Annual Report on Yendi District 1915'; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211/n.n. 'Annual Report of the Yendi District 1916'; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/487/n.n. 'Report on the Southern Province, Northern Territories for the Quarter Ending 30th September, 1921'; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/497/n.n. 'Report on British Mandated Sphere of Togoland for the Year 1922'.

<sup>16</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.67/5/2 'Yendi – Village Record Book vol. I (1919-1930)'.

<sup>17</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/30 'Nanumba Native Administration (1930-31)'. A 1917 preliminary Franco-British Togoland boundary provided that all Nanun was administered from Krachi, which was British (Bassari became French) (PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/497/n.n. 'Report on British Mandated Sphere of Togoland for the Year 1922').

<sup>18</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/287/34 Dep CCNT DC Krachi (29-12-1922); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/287/20 DPO Yendi to CCNT (06-01-1921); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/287/21 DPO Yendi and DPO Krachi to

Nanun's chieftaincy would remain autonomous from that of Dagomba, but this could not prevent that Nanumba eventually lost all three villages to Dagbon: Tagnemo in 1923; Jagbuni in 1927 and Korli in 1935.<sup>19</sup>

The British plans for Kikpakpaan were quite different. While the Germans had planned to construct a railway to densely populated Saboba and had installed village leaders for labour recruitment, the British interpreted such interventions as a flawing of Konkomba tribute to Dagomba. The preliminary 1917 French-British Togoland boundary largely followed the Oti River which divided Kikpakpaan. Throughout the 1920s, Konkomba were subjected to British and French aspirations for having as few tribes as possible deprived by their borders, but this agenda was continuously subverted by the problem of tribal demarcation and tribes straddling their territories (cf. Nugent 1996: 39-41).<sup>20</sup> A French interest in the physically strong Konkomba for their army and British considerations that Konkomba were Dagomba, and hence British, subjects, resulted in a status quo during the final border demarcation in 1929, thus leaving a good deal of administrative irritations between the British and French when it came to the Konkomba situation (see below).<sup>21</sup>

In the British mandate, District Political Officer Poole suggested in 1916 that Konkomba required self-governance through a paramount chief but his assistant Cardinall advised Chief Commissioner Armitage that he 'must use every endeavour to bring this wild but interesting tribe to recognise the authority of, and to become law-abiding subjects under, the Dagomba Chiefs'.<sup>22</sup> The latter approach won, even though in reality, Dagomba control over Konkomba had been sporadic and most Dagomba chiefs were afraid of going to Konkomba villages.<sup>23</sup>

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CCNT (18-01-1921); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/487/n.n. 'Report on the Southern Province, Northern Territories for the Quarter Ending 31st December, 1921'.

<sup>19</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/287/22 DC Eastern Dagomba to CSP (07-06-1922); respectively PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/300/n.n. CSP to CCNT (18-06-1925); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/300/n.n. PCSP to ACCNT (16-07-1923) 'Tagenemo Dispute'; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/300/n.n. 'Settlement of the Dagomba-Nanumba Boundary Dispute' (06-07-1935); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/300/n.n. DC Dagomba to CCNT (23-07-1935); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/300/n.n. CCNT to DC Dagomba (27-07-1935); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/300/n.n. Ag DC Dagomba to Ag CCNT (14-10-1935) 'Nanumba-Dagomba Boundary'; respectively PRAAD/T/NRG8/1/3/123 CSP to CCNT (15-06-1927) 'Boundary Dispute between the Chief of Miong (Dagomba) and the Chief of Bimbilla (Nanumba) over the Village of Jabuni'.

<sup>20</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/1/3 'Boundaries (1921-30)'; PRAAD/T/NRG8/1/8/103a Gold Coast Gazette (13-01-1931) 'Joint Report by the Two Committees Appointed for the Purpose of Delimiting the Frontier Separating the territories of Togoland placed respectively under the authority of the British and French mandates for Togoland (20-07-1922)'.

<sup>21</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/1/2 Krachi DPO to The Record Officer (03-04-1921); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211/n.n. DPO 'Diary for January 1918'.

<sup>22</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211/n.n. DPO to CCNT (11-06-1916); respectively. PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211/n.n. Ag DPO to CCNT (23-10-1916); PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211 'Annual Report Yendi District (1916)'.

<sup>23</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211 'Annual Report Yendi District (1916)'; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/204/n.n. DPO (25-01-1916) 'Handing-Over Report'.

Although Dagomba probably never really exercised control over most Konkomba villages, they executed regular slave raids among Konkomba to fulfil tribute to Asante. Many Konkomba sought refuge in the swampy lands at the Oti River, where the horses of slave-raiding Dagomba could not reach, like other segmented societies (Goody 1971: 57; Piot 1999: 33). Although Poole and Cardinall disagreed on the administrative handling of Konkomba, they shared a fascination for them. In ethnographic work, Cardinall was fascinated by the ‘real’ Konkomba, who were not living under the Dagomba ‘yoke’ but hence were completely anarchical (1918: 46). Cardinall and Poole displayed a dislike of Dagomba as ‘lazy, effete, passive resisters of the worst description’ and an appreciation of Konkomba, similar to earlier civil German expeditions:

‘[Konkomba] are industrious, merry and prolific. [...] They are impetuous, seldom separated from their bows and arrows, and like the Irish always ready for a scrap. A brush between two villages is common and a few casualties on either side seem to worry them not at all. In my opinion this is a better trait than inertia and immovability.’<sup>24</sup>

But such loyalties did not interfere with a British self-imposed responsibility towards reproducing the pre-colonial social order which legitimated Konkomba subjection to Dagomba.

Although continuous ‘Konkomba disturbances’ were regarded as ‘normal Konkomba fracas with no political significance’, because they were about ‘faithless women and strong peto’ and not affecting colonial law and order,<sup>25</sup> such assessments systematically ignored the revolting realities of Konkomba sabotaging British telegraph wires, killing a soldier or a surveyor and his wife.<sup>26</sup> British penal measures were usually communal, especially crop and compound burning but these economically disruptive measures did not go well with the colonial government in Accra and reprimanded the northern administration for such measures in 1929. The Commissioner for the Southern Province (CSP) of the Northern Territories thereupon cautioned the Yendi District Commissioner that the Konkomba area was monitored by the League of Nations and that, although ‘the Konkomba are unlike any other tribes in the Northern Territories’,

<sup>24</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/204/n.n. DPO (25-01-1916) ‘Handing-Over Report’.

<sup>25</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211/n.n. DPO (31-12-1915) ‘Annual Report on Yendi District 1915’. Similar riots occurred for instance in Kutja, Sambul and Kanjoch in 1915 (PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/300/64 Ag CCNT to Ag CSP (07-01-1927)), Sambul in 1920 (PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/62 ‘Inquiry into Konkomba Riot’ (1934)) and PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/62/32 CCNT to CS (28-08-1934)); Tschegbani and Kuntuli in 1927 (PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/300/45 Northern Terr. Constabulary to CCNT (31-01-1925)), Sambul in 1920 (PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/62 ‘Inquiry into Konkomba Riot’ (1934)) and PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/62/32 CCNT to CS (28-08-1934)).

<sup>26</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/211 ‘Annual Report Yendi District (1916)’; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/214 ‘Kutja Incident 1915-1917’; respectively PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/21/19 DC Eastern Dagomba to CSP (21-01-1929); see also PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/21/8 CCNT to CS (03-01-1929); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/21/5 CSP to CCNT (02-01-1929); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/21/8 CCNT to CS (03-01-1929).

communal labour had proven a satisfactory punitive measure in other districts.<sup>27</sup> This proposal was quite different from that of District Commissioner Gilbert, who had written that ‘if they fight again they should be severely punished and moved from that area’.<sup>28</sup>

However, Konkomba hardly needed pushing, as since the 1920s, enabled by a colonial *pax* (Skalník 1983: 19), tens of thousands of them voluntarily left the conflicts and population pressure in Kikpakpaan. I found no evidence of British prevention nor of encouragement of this massive resettlement.<sup>29</sup>

Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Kikpakpaan was ravaged by overpopulation, soil exhaustion (the land was ‘alternately a swamp and a dust bowl’, Hilton 1959: 27), a series of droughts, pests and locust plagues,<sup>30</sup> and consequently family feuds. Initially, Konkomba headed for the highly cultivated Krachi area, where the British release of Grushi slaves after World War I had left a labour deficit (Hilton 1959), but many Konkomba who walked towards the south, carrying pots and pans on their head, found favourable virgin bush perfect for the cultivation of tubers (yams and cassava), on the way in ‘a great triangle of formerly unoccupied territory between Salaga, Bimbilla, and Krachi’, largely in Nanun (Tait 1961: 30; cf. Barker 1986: 175). Pioneering migrants walked back ‘home’ to show tokens of their abundant yam harvest, and many relatives followed them to Nanun, a trend which accelerated after the 1931 introduction of direct taxation. Although Basari, Chakosi and Kabré farmers and Fulani herdsmen were also attracted to the lands of Nanun, Konkomba were the largest group of settlers by far (see below).

## Indirect rule (1931-1951)

The implementation of direct taxation to replace forced labour abolished in a 1930 Geneva Convention (Brukum 1999: 113), was part of the 1931 introduction of indirect rule, integrating chieftaincy into the colonial administration and renaming the northern public ‘Native Lands’ (Konings 1984: 7; Lund 2008: 33-34). Although the Gold Coast administration had wanted to introduce indirect rule, which had become the standard in other British colonies since the mid-

<sup>27</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/21/27 Ag CS to CCNT (14-06-1929), respectively PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/21 CSP to DC Eastern Dagomba (26-09-1929); see also PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/21 DC Eastern Dagomba to CSP (01-07-1929).

<sup>28</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/21 DC Eastern Dagomba to CSP (01-07-1929).

<sup>29</sup> Administrators seldom noted the migration: PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/368/n.n. ‘Informal Diary of the District Commissioner Krachi for May 1926’; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/368/n.n. ‘Extracts of Official Informal Diaries of the Southern Province for Month of June, 1925’; PRAAD/T/NRG8/4/20/n.n. ‘Krachi District Informal Diary for the Month of August, 1930’; PRAAD/T/NRG8/4/94/57 ‘Informal Diary – District Commissioner Dagomba, April 1945’.

<sup>30</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/4/94/76 ‘Informal Diary of District Commissioner, Dagomba, Yendi, for the Month of November, 1946’; PRAAD/A/ADM.56/1/368/n.n. ‘Extracts of Official Informal Diaries of the Southern Province for Month of June, 1925’. See also Weiss (2003).

1920s, this administrative change did not go smoothly in the Gold Coast and Ashanti nor in the Northern Territories. While in the former, educated ‘natives’ resisted the idea of delegating sovereignty to illiterate chiefs, it was rather the local administrators who resisted the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories. The degradation of the north reflected on the administrators in the protectorate, most of whom were old hands with a military background and who argued that they already practiced indirect rule as far as possible and that the northerner chiefs would be incapable of fulfilling further administrative functions (Talton 2003a: 98; 2003b).

But when Chief Commissioner Walker-Leigh retired in December 1928, this was a pretext for replacing almost the entire northern administration by personnel with a civil background. William Andrew Jones became the Chief Commissioner and he implemented indirect rule together with the new DC for Yendi (H.A. Blair) and the commissioner for the Southern Province of the NT (A.C. Duncan-Johnstone). The latter found the Gold Coast type of indirect rule too complicated for the Northern Territories and he wrote his own guidebook based on Donald Cameron’s policies for mostly stateless societies in Tanganyika (Talton 2003a: 114). Although indirect rule was a system of convenience and cutbacks (one-third of the colonial employees lost their jobs during the economic world crisis; Rathbone 2000: 15; Staniland 1975: 105), it was primarily an ideology of customary administration (Mamdani 1996; Rathbone 2000).

Indirect rule required gathering ethnographic data on local customs in so-called ‘constitutions’. A Dagomba constitution and its implementation in a 1931 conference formally made Konkomba in Kikpakpaan subjects of Dagomba chiefs. Later that year, a similar Nanumba constitution was drawn up (see below). Most ethnographies for this purpose were conducted by colonial officers, because the colonial administration in the Northern Territories had an aversion to academic anthropologists until the 1950s. The distinction between both forms of ethnography should not be wiped out but also not overestimated: colonial officers of that generation had had academic anthropological training in Accra, Cambridge or Oxford (Goody 1995: 40; Lentz 1999: 123) and not only were their research methods (interviews with chiefs and elders) similar to those of anthropologists, but they also shared an interest in social order (Lentz 1999: 138; cf. Pels & Salemink 1999).

The administrative aversion to academia had its roots in a project of Gold Coast Government Anthropologist Rattray, who had been flown into Tamale in 1929 with a lot of fuss to conduct a comprehensive ethnographic study of the Northern Territories (but not of the Togoland mandate). In his research report, which led to his 1932 *Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, he insulted local administrators by calling his work the protectorate’s first ethnography (Goody 1995:

207; Lentz 1999: 137).<sup>31</sup> He criticised the administrative fixation on chiefs as village leaders, arguing that earth priests were more accountable leaders, and rejected the local applicability of the ‘tribe’ concept, which was central to British administration in spite of its obvious controversies (Lentz 1999: 122; 2006: 101; cf. Piot 1999: 132-134; Skalník 1996: 110).<sup>32</sup> In the mid 1930s, Meyer Fortes was the first academic ethnographer to experience this administrative suspicion towards anthropology, even though his research on Tallensi (300 kilometres north of Nanun) was paid for by the Rockefeller-funded International African Institute (Goody 1995: 41; Stocking 1991: 53), and he always stressed the benefits of his research to the colonial administration (Fortes 1945: xiii).

It is in this context that we should understand the arrival of assisting commissioner H.W. Amherst in Bimbilla on 6 September 1931, for three weeks of ethnographic fieldwork to write a Constitution on Nanumba customs to benefit the introduction of indirect rule.<sup>33</sup> Amherst’s journey was the first colonial expedition entirely focused on Nanun, a small and scarcely populated far-away place which had seldom earned more attention than in side-notes. When Amherst asked his superiors for a fieldwork extension, they replied that no further enquiry was needed, because ‘[t]his little state must eventually be absorbed by Dagomba’.<sup>34</sup>

Everything about his expedition testified of the limited interest of the colonial enterprise in Nanun: Amherst was accompanied by a translator from Yendi (the district capital) and not by a local assistant, he had no vehicle at his disposal and his expedition was scheduled during the peak of rainy season. However, Amherst’s zeal was striking: He succeeded in reaching all corners of Nanun during his fieldwork to ascertain its boundaries and crosscheck his Bimbilla data. Amherst told his interlocutors (mainly chiefs, elders and tom-tom beaters) that his research was to benefit a Conference similar to those held in Dagbon and Gonja

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<sup>31</sup> Rattray’s discovery of a linguist unity behind the apparent mosaic of tribal groupings, their dichotomy of autochthonous element (earth priests) conquered by Mole-Dagbani speakers, and the village-level distinction between chiefs and earth priests were by no means novel (cf. Zech 1904; Cardinall 1918, 1929: 407). Rattray’s innovation was the comparison of his material to that of Ashanti, Australia and North America, thereby using transplanting concepts such as ‘clan’ and ‘totem’ to the Northern Territories (Lentz 1999: 137, 144; Lentz & Nugent 2000: 7-8).

<sup>32</sup> For example, sometimes Konkomba were a tribe, in other documents they were many tribes and yet in others, they were a subset of Dagomba (PRAAD/T/NRG8/1/3/n.n. CSP (02-07-1925) ‘Boundaries of the Mandated Area of Togoland’). Ferguson had classified the northern people as he found them, according to their various degrees of capacity for political negotiations: Muslim converts and traders (mostly Hausa); semi barbarous tribes with a form of organized government (e.g. Nanumba and Dagomba); and wild tribes (Konkomba), living in independent family communities (Goody 1971: 54; Lentz & Nugent 2000: 116, 119). However, the tribe concept became increasingly prescriptive (cf. Lentz 1994: 469), i.e. what they once were and should become in future as native states. By denying the historicity of the northern tribes, Rattray undermined the project of indirect rule.

<sup>33</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/35 ‘Nanumba Kingdom (1931)’.

<sup>34</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/30 ‘Nanumba Native Administration (1930-31), entries 14 and 1.

(1931b: 3), to which his informants were reportedly sympathetic. On his day of arrival, Bimbilla Naa Abdulai met Amherst in the Rest House with a cow.

The next day, Amherst had a series of interviews, during which he found that ‘my impressions at the end of yester day were largely wrong’ (1931a: 3). He feared that ‘if one kept on questioning them every day for a year one would still be inaccurate and full of half truths’ which he blamed on his informants: Winning their trust was one thing but their subjection to taboos and ignorance were much harder to overcome (op. cit.: 4; 1, 3). The day’s disappointment was his interview with the imam, who was a Nanumba: ‘I had hoped that he would be a long-domicile Hausa [...] and not so subject to the Taboos’ (1931a: 4). But if Amherst believed that he could keep on asking the same questions for a year and still have them half answered, this had probably as much to do with his questions as with their answers. Considering that, as in other parts of Africa during colonial rule, local leadership also had its stakes in such ‘ethnographic occasions’ (Pels 1996; Pels & Salemink 1999; cf. Bayart 1993: 20ff; 2000: 248), Amherst’s interlocutors were probably hardly ignorant or superstitious, but rather actors in an epistemological role-play in which they decided what information was best made clear, left ambiguous or concealed.

The uncertainties about his data did not find their way into the lines of his fifty-page constitution. This report has eight sections, on area, boundaries and population and history, followed by sections on administration, judiciary, tribute, ethnography and agriculture. Nanun’s ‘traditional’ administration was supposedly untouched by ‘modern conditions’ such as Islam and the German occupation (1931b: 12). It is very striking that this depiction was not only detached from Amherst’s encounter, but also silent about the massive settlement of Konkomba farmers.

The only changes in Nanun, for Amherst, were those of internal evolution: Nanumba had ‘nearly, but not quite, emerged from the family-group stage’, divisional chieftaincies existed only in ‘embryo form’ and open competition to chiefly titles, once common around the Volta Basin, was still prevalent (1931b: 12, 13, 15). Amherst conceptualised Nanumba chieftaincy as a form of authoritative rule spread over five chiefly classes (royal chiefs, electors, elders, warriors and female chiefs), based on voluntary tribute rather than coercion. The judiciary, Amherst argued, was controlled by the Bimbilla Naa and his elders, and ritually sanctioned.<sup>35</sup>

One and a half years later, on 11 February 1933, Yendi District Commissioner Cockey organised a Conference with Nanumba chiefs to implement indirect

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<sup>35</sup> Transgressors could for instance drink from the ‘fetish’ Malesogo of Kukuo village and promising not to repeat his or her behaviour, at the risk of being killed by Malesogo if this promise was broken (op. cit.: 29).

rule.<sup>36</sup> At this Conference, Amherst's descriptions of Nanumba organisation were made prescriptive in customary law. The Nanumba State Council (also the Judicial Council) of the Bimbilla Naa and titles in the five classes of chiefs were fixed. The Native Judicial Court had jurisdiction in civil issues such as matrimonial affairs, inheritance and land possession and was sovereign in criminal law violations, such as theft, crop destruction, arms possession and public fighting. The Conference appeared to have been silent on the Konkomba population. Konkomba settlers had no role in the Nanumba Native Authority, but they were subjected to its authority and jurisdiction.

During indirect rule, which lasted until 1951, there were two key events which stimulated Konkomba migration to Nanun, fostered British administrative doubts about their Kikpakpaan policy (subjecting Konkomba to Dagomba), and which bore the seeds of Nanumba renouncing their reception of Konkomba. The first event was the 1936 French 'pacification' (demilitarisation followed by development) of Konkomba to counter the Konkomba feuds which had plagued the French mandate since the introduction of civil rule in 1922 (Froelich 1954: 37-39). Fearing that Konkomba would massively flee to British Togoland, the Governor of Dahomey and his delegates actively rallied British cooperation. The local British administration refused to close the border, sent back refugees, destroy all *strophantus* plants (from which poison for arrows was extracted) and prohibit hunting, as the French had requested, because all such measures had been unsuccessfully exerted by the British, who now preferred confidence building to coercion.<sup>37</sup>

So the French pacification of the Konkomba area went ahead without British support in January and February 1936. Although the executive Lieutenant Massu called it 'an extremely peaceful pastime' (Lestrade 1994: 115), no less than 300,000 arrows were confiscated and large numbers of French Konkomba fled to British Togoland (Cornevin 1959: 699; Tcham 1994).<sup>38</sup> After the pacification, Konkomba were apparently rather successfully appeased by infrastructural, agricultural and educational investments (Cornevin 1964: 699; Tcham 1994).

The second critical event in Kikpakpaan was the September 1940 local Konkomba assassination of the Dagomba chief and twelve of his entourage in

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<sup>36</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/59 'Native Tribunal (Nanumba Area) Order 1933'.

<sup>37</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70 Sgd. Bourguine, Governor to The Governor of the Gold Coast (03-03-1935); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70/7 CCNT to DC Dagomba (26-03-1935); cf. PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70/10b DC Dagomba to Commandant de Cercle de Sokodé; PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70/13 CCNT to The Ag CS (26-03-1935); see also PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70/24b (Sgd) H.W.M. Hamford, I.G.P.: 'Minute by the Inspector General of Police, dated 15th September 1935'; PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70/24a Ag Governor to The Lieutenant-Governor of Dahomey (24-09-1935); see also PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70 DC Dagomba to CCNT (09-08-1935); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70/23 CCNT to CS (28-08-1935).

<sup>38</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70/49a (Sgd) M.L. Fraser C.O.P. 'Konkomba Patrol' (19-02-1936); see also PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/70/39 Ag DC Dagomba to CCNT (12-02-1936).

Segberi (see Talton 2003a, 2003b).<sup>39</sup> A week earlier, veterinary assistant Binka had arrived in Segberi to inoculate cattle and the Segberi Naa delegated two men for his assistance. Binka found that some Konkomba cattle were not immunised and sent the owners with the chief's delegates to the palace for making a report. These delegates were shot at a Konkomba compound, causing minor injuries. As the Yendi escort police arrived a few days later, they met a large troop of Konkomba, and they could not prevent the mentioned palace attack on 11 September. As Dagomba warriors from surrounding villages arrived to punish the Konkomba communities (with British consent), they found all communities deserted. In the next two days, escort police arrested almost fifty fleeing Konkomba on the road to Bimbilla. By the end of the week, hundreds of men, women and children were held by the Yendi police, and 73 were officially arrested, while the main perpetrators were believed to have crossed over to French territory.<sup>40</sup>

Although only one or two Konkomba clans were involved in the confrontation, Chief Commissioner Jones applied the *Peace and Preservation Act* to communally 'teach the Konkomba the lesson which they have to learn'. He found that 'we must cease to treat the Konkomba as naughty, but amusing children', because '[f]or twenty-five years they have been a festering sore on an otherwise healthy administrative body'.<sup>41</sup> A very different voice, however, came from the director of Veterinary Services, which had carried out immunisation schemes in Konkomba communities for almost a decade without problems. The director rather blamed exploitative Dagomba for the Segberi rising and he observed that Konkomba emigrants in Nanun and adjacent areas 'appear to lose suddenly their vicious savagery'.<sup>42</sup>

But it was the Chief Commissioner's perspective which prevailed in a meeting with the Governor in Accra early October, at which they agreed on the opening of a staffed police station and fifty escort police at the central Konkomba village of Saboba, the prohibition and destruction of bows and arrows and the construction of a bridge over the river Tupe to make the area year-round accessible.<sup>43</sup> However, a year later, police patrols were reduced to normal strength and months later, the Northern Territories administration decided that neither financial nor

<sup>39</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/4 CCNT to CS (17-09-1940).

<sup>40</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/6 Asst Superintendent, Gold Coast Police to CCNT (22-09-1940); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/13 Superintendent Gold Coast Police/N.TS to CCNT (09-10-1940); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/ Superintendent Gold Coast Police/N.TS to Ag CCNT (27-12-1940); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/29a Superintendent Gold Coast Police/N.TS: 'Konkomba riot-September 1940. Report of Konkomba Patrol up to 31.12.1940' (31-12-1940).

<sup>41</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/4 CCNT to CS (17-09-1940).

<sup>42</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/51 Director Veterinary Services to Ag CCNT (18-03-1941); see also PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/1a F.K. Binka to The Director of Veterinary Services (16-09-1940); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/49 DC Dagomba to Ag CCNT (25-04-1941).

<sup>43</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88 CCNT to CS (02-11-1940).

human resources permitted the development of a subordinate Native Authority in the Konkomba area.<sup>44</sup>

The rising attempts 'to win back the confidence of Konkomba' however resulted in the opening of a Konkomba administrative sub-district after all in February 1947, after the completion of a road to Saboba.<sup>45</sup> In the opening ceremony, Acting Chief Commissioner Guthrie Hall challenged Konkomba to be responsible for settling their own disputes.<sup>46</sup> He also inaugurated James Anderson as the sub-district officer. Anderson was charged to write a 'Memorandum on Konkomba policy' (1947),<sup>47</sup> which rather than fixing their customs, pragmatically gave several scenarios for future Konkomba administration. Rather than recommending the creation of a separate Konkomba council, Anderson proposed to choose the most stable option, the recognition of councils of elders subjected to Dagomba chiefs, because Konkomba were facing 'the most severe trial in a people's history': Education (1947: 14).

Anderson also called for a halt to Konkomba emigration because the area was getting depopulated: Between the 1920s and 1940s, perhaps up to three-quarters of the British Kikpakpaan population had left.<sup>48</sup> 'French' Konkomba also massively settled in Nanun and adjacent areas, diverted from mountainous Central French Togoland and often fleeing the French 'pacification'. Although Anderson's proposal was copied by Hall, the Konkomba sub-district foreshadowed the abolition of indirect rule in the Gold Coast in 1951, after which Anderson's report was rendered 'irrelevant'.<sup>49</sup>

## Citizenship (1951-1979)

Judging from administrative reports, nothing had happened in Nanun since the 1933 Conference. In reality however, Nanun experienced one of its most dramatic demographic changes. Completion of a road between Bimbilla and Kumasi greatly enhanced the yam trade to the southern cities and triggered Konkomba to settle in Nanun. In spite of their inaccuracies,<sup>50</sup> census materials are telling: Be-

<sup>44</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/74 DC Dagomba to Ag CCNT (13-12-1941); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/88/78 Ag CCNT to CS (09-02-1942).

<sup>45</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/4/94/54 'Informal Diary – District Commissioner Dagomba, February 1945'

<sup>46</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/97/5 DC Dagomba (n.d.); PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/47/2 'The Opening of the Saboba Sub-Station, 18th February, 1947'.

<sup>47</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/97/9 Asst. DC James Anderson (02-07-1947) 'Memorandum on Konkomba Policy'.

<sup>48</sup> From 40,000 to 12,000; PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/97/10 DC Dagomba to Colonial Secretary (19-06-1947).

<sup>49</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/97/2 Senior DC Dagomba to CCNT (22-08-1951).

<sup>50</sup> Inaccuracy was due to counting constraints, sometimes 'owing to the wildness of the people' (PRAAD/A/ADM.5/2 'Census Report 1921', p. 141), and due to tribal definition and demarcation. For example, while in the German 1907 census, 7791 Konkomba were counted in the Yendi district, the 1921 British census counted 6562 Konkomba as against 10,148 Chamba (PRAAD/A/-

tween the 1931 and 1960 counts, Nanun experienced the colony's highest annual growth percentages.<sup>51</sup> While in the 1931 census, Nanun had an ethnically homogeneous population of 7927 (less than 2/km<sup>2</sup>), Konkomba had become Nanun's 'largest tribe' with over 20,000 inhabitants thirty years later.

Konkomba and Nanumba coexisted peacefully but their interactions were mostly economic and they did not intermarry. Many Nanumba despised Konkomba as *bonkobɔ̀* (bush animal) or *nirbimaa* (those people), while Konkomba found Nanumba arrogant. From the onset, Nanumba called these settlers 'Kpungpamba' (Konkomba), while Konkomba usually called Nanumba 'Bidagbam' (Dagomba). In chapter four, I study this coexistence in detail.

Nanun was however on the eve of perhaps even more drastic changes, due to circumstances which largely happened in the Gold Coast and Ashanti colonies. There, educated natives who had been systematically seconded to often inadequate chiefs, started to call for independence (Staniland 1975: 41, 105, 107; Rathbone 2000: 17). These external changes were internalised by a growing group of educated Nanumba youth.

In 1947, Kwame Nkrumah returned from London to the Gold Coast to join the United Gold Coast Convention party founded by J.B. Danquah a year earlier, but the event of a British police shooting turning into an anti-colonial riot in Accra in 1948 drove a wedge between them. While the moderate Danquah was on good terms with chiefs and with the British, Nkrumah radically opposed both. In 1949, Nkrumah established the socialist Convention People's Party (CPP) and toured the colony – including the Northern Territories – to rally the support of the youth, such as the Asante Youth Association which had been established in 1947 (Allman 1990). In the North, Nkrumah ignored the chiefs but instead rallied the support of the youth and women, through *magasia* (women leaders). Danquah responded with a similar itinerary, but calling on chiefs' palaces, in the company of Alhassan Chamba, the first literate Nanumba, who after working in the Dagomba Native Authority became a journalist with the Ashanti Pioneer in Kumasi (Ladouceur 1979: 81; 88).

The northern interest of Nkrumah and Danquah was the result of granting full citizenship to northerners. After the Accra riots, the Governor established two commissions to draw the colonial future of the Gold Coast. The two main

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ADM.56/1/211/n.n. 'Annual Report of the Yendi District 1916'). Chamba almost disappeared from later censuses. See also Kirby (1986) and Lentz (2006c: 84).

<sup>51</sup> NRG8/34/1 'Census 1931 Mandates Area (62/1930) (1931)'; Census Office (1964, 1972); Ghana Statistical Service (1989, 2002); While the national population growth rate between 1931 and 1970 never exceeded three percent, the Nanun population grew significantly faster, with over 5 percent per annum between 1931 and 1948 (the highest in the colony), 7 percent per annum between 1948 and 1960 and almost 4 percent per annum between 1960 and 1970. After 1970, overall population growth normalised in Nanun, with an average annual growth of 2 percent (1970-1984) and almost 3 percent (1984-2000).

recommendations were the abolition of indirect rule and the unification of the Gold Coast, Ashanti and the Northern Territories under an African government, both which were enshrined in the 1950 Barnes Constitution and implemented on 1 January 1951 (Bening 1999: 253; Rathbone 2000: 98). Nanun became a full part of Gold Coast, after Bimbilla Naa Natogmah had given his consent to a delegation from the United Nations, the successor of the League of Nations of which Togoland was still a mandate.<sup>52</sup> In 1951, Nkrumah won the African Government elections and became Prime Minister.

In Nanun, although the Native Authority was abolished, chiefs continued to be represented in the three newly established Local Councils of Bimbilla, Dakpam and Nakpaa. These were the three largest chieftaincies and the respective chiefs presided over these councils. These councils, which merged to one in 1956, accelerated local development. While it had taken until 1949 until the Nanumba Day School in Bimbilla was opened, schools mushroomed after 1951. Bimbilla got a small health centre and a number of dams were constructed (Skalnik 1979: 22). A few years later the Evangelical Presbyterian (Basel) Mission opened a station in Bimbilla and established a Teacher's Training College on the outskirts of town.

By that time, there were just a handful of Nanumba literates and probably no Konkomba literates in Nanun. However, the number of northern literates was increasing and some of them founded the Northern Youth Association in 1952, modelled after the Asante Youth Association (Ladouceur 1979: 113). I have found no evidence of Nanumba youth organisations in the 1950s but the Northern Youth Association set a precedent for local Dagomba and Konkomba youth groups.<sup>53</sup> Although there were no Konkomba literates in Nanun yet, in Kikpakpaan, Konkomba had had to fulfil village school enrolment quota for the school in Yendi in the 1940s. Initially, they sent orphans but Konkomba interest in schooling drastically increased over that decade, especially because recruited Konkomba native police, after being stationed in the south, saw the advantage of education for their children.<sup>54</sup> The first Konkomba students graduated from Yendi Middle School years after its opening in 1948. During the 'tribal meetings' in Yendi school, Konkomba students discovered that their cultural-linguistic similarities outweighed their varying dialects and face marks (Talton 2003a: 161-173; 2003c).

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<sup>52</sup> The chief's declaration was verbal but transcribed by the team. 'Petition from the Na of Bimbilla, Paramount Chief of the Nanumbas, His Sub-Chiefs and the People of Nanumba State concerning Togoland under British Administration' (14-12-1949).

<sup>53</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG1/11/5/4 Secretary Yendi Youth Association to The Director of Social Welfare and Community Development (08-04-1957) 'Yendi Youth Association'; PRAAD/T/NRG1/11/5/9 Secretary Eastern Dagomba Students Union to Mr. G.U.L. Edwards, Government Agent (26-01-1959); PRAAD/T/NRG1/11/5/2 'Dagomba Youth Movement' (n.d.).

<sup>54</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/3/167 'Annual Report Dagomba and Nanumba District 1949-50', p. 15.

In 1951, some of these graduates were employed in the new Saboba Primary School, which had been opened with the help of the Assemblies of God mission (see below). The Konkomba teachers organised themselves in the Konkomba Improvement Association and were especially interested in the unification and development of Konkomba. They focused on girls, because sending a girl to school would counter the backward and feud-triggering marriage system of betrothal (Talton 2003a: 169-170; 173). The initiative collapsed when the teachers were transferred to other parts of the colony in 1956, but was reactivated in the late 1970s (see below).

The rise of emancipating youth was important in the context of the political developments in the Northern Territories. In 1953, one year ahead of the first elections of the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly, the Northern Territories electorate was granted equal rights to those in the south (Bening 1999: 253), obtaining one quarter (26) of the Legislative Assembly seats (Ladouceur 1979: 113). The Gonja literate Braimah founded the Northern People's Party (NPP) for the development of the north and the administration of the north by northerners (Ladouceur 1979: 113; 126). While CPP won almost three-quarters of the seats, NPP won half of the northern seats and became the largest opposition party (Ladouceur 1979: 129; Rathbone 2000: 28). Although NPP was reputed to be a party of chiefs, and the Mamprusi paramount chief was a devout supporter, CPP won in Dagbon and Nanun. In a serious chieftaincy dispute in Dagbon about the legitimacy of the paramount chief, Nkrumah initially wanted to replace the incumbent chief (Ya Na Abudulai III) with CPP supporter Andani, the chief of Mion village. However, as CPP spin doctors told Nkrumah that such intervention the removal of the incumbent would cost him a lot of votes in the North, Nkrumah tactically rallied the incumbent's support, which probably influenced the political preferences of Bimbilla Naa Natogmah, who gave his support to CPP and their candidate, his literate 'brother' whose name was also Natogmah (Ladouceur 1979: 103, 119).

Newcomer NPP was uneasy with its position as opposition leader and in the next years, newly established regional parties from elsewhere in Gold Coast sought the alliance of NPP. The first was the Ashanti-based National Liberation Movement (NLM) which aspired federalism or even separate Ashanti independence and the second was the Ewe-dominated Togoland Congress, which did not want to become part of an independent Ghana. NPP opposed both agendas and basically, the party opposed to Gold Coast's nearing independence and the prospect of being governed by Asante, and pointed at the British responsibility through their treaties (made by Ferguson) with the northern chiefs (Ladouceur 1979: 157). NPP however concurred to Independence after the British Govern-

ment released a special Development Scheme for the north (Ladouceur 1979: 162).

The last hurdle to Gold Coast's Independence was the status of the Togoland mandate. In 1956 therefore, the United Nations held a referendum ('plebiscite') in which the Mandate population could vote for or against integration into independent Ghana. CPP and NPP – who both had consolidated their seats in the Legislative Assembly in the 1956 elections – jointly campaigned for integration, while the Togoland Congress opposed integration. One of the leading Togoland Congress politicians was the Nanumba Alhassan Chambas, who had campaigned for Danquah in 1949, but who did not trust that the northern interest would be secured in an independent Ghana and argued that it would be better to be under the United Nations than under Asante. The results of the plebiscite were disappointing for Chambas: Because Bimbilla Naa Natogmah was a CPP supporter, no less than 84.1 percent of the Nanun electorate voted for integration. Two-thirds of the Konkomba in Kikpakpaan – where Chambas had actively campaigned – also said 'yes' to Ghana, thereby definitively turning their backs to Konkomba in the French area.<sup>55</sup> Although Cornevin (1959: 699) argued that this was due to the Konkomba indifference to wider political structures, the strategic border-crossing of Konkomba settlers rather indicated a profound consciousness of Gold Coast and Togoland nationalism.<sup>56</sup> An Ewe majority opposed integration into Ghana but their vote was not enough to win the plebiscite (Nugent 1996).

And so it happened that Nanun became part of independent Ghana on 6 March 1957, with Kwame Nkrumah as prime minister (the British Queen remained the Head of State until 1960). In order to numb Ewe resistance and opposition from regional parties such as NPP, Nkrumah passed the Avoidance of Discrimination Bill in December 1957 to declare the entire opposition illegal (Ladouceur 1979: 164). Between 1958 and 1960, almost all former opposition members (including Chambas) joined the CPP, causing the incorporation of the northern elite into national institutions and the penetration of local institutions by national agents and ideas. On the whole, northerners lost their voice and became further marginalised under Nkrumah's rule (Ladouceur 1979: 181, 187). In 1958, the Northern Region replaced the Northern Territories but the Northern Regional Assembly was abolished a year later, for Nkrumah found it 'a waste of money' (Ladouceur 1979: 167; Rathbone 2000: 130). The Northern Development Scheme also vanished (Ladouceur 1979: 167). In early 1958, Nanumba district was dissolved and Nanun became administered from Yendi again (Skalnik 1979: 22).

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<sup>55</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG1/3/9 'Togoland Plebiscite Results (1956)'.

<sup>56</sup> On border-crossing, see Froelich 1954: 36; Lestrade 1994; for debates about borders as 'theatres of opportunity', see also (Lentz 2003), Nugent & Asiwaju (1996: 11) and Nugent (2002).

The status of chiefs was ambivalent under Nkrumah. According to Mamdani, Nkrumah reacted to indirect rule's 'decentralised despotism' by rigidly stressing equal citizenship and denigrating traditional authorities (Mamdani 1996: 291) but the thesis that Nkrumah wanted to wipe out chieftaincy requires adjustment (Rathbone 2000: 22, 99). Although Nkrumah found chiefs repressive and out-dated, he increasingly also manipulated chiefs to win the confidence of their subjects, and chiefs were not passive in this at all. In 1958, he therefore set up the Regional Houses of Chiefs (Rathbone 2000: 46). It was in this context that in 1959, Bimbilla Naa Dasana succeeded Natogmah, who had died in 1957 (Skalnik 1979: 47). CPP also installed new chiefs where there had been none, such as in Nkwanta south of Nanun (see below).

Although CPP made education and health care available to the masses – in Nanun alone, dozens of schools were opened in the early 1960s – the once flourishing economy of the Gold Coast and Ashanti colonies suffered much from his socialistic policies. Moreover, especially after a 1964 'referendum' had made Ghana a single-party state, many Ghanaians dreamt of a return to constitutional democracy and a liberation of chieftaincy. This silent opposition was a fertile ground for a coup against Nkrumah in 1966. A military National Liberation Council deposed several chiefs who had been installed by Nkrumah and organised elections in August 1969, which were won by the Progress Party of Kofi Busia, a close ally of Danquah. Busia became unpopular for his economic policies (he devaluated the cedi on the advice of the IMF) and his pro-Asante politics and in 1972, Busia was overthrown by the northerner General I.K. Acheampong, who in turn was overthrown by General F.W.K. Akuffo in 1978, who himself was ousted by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings on 4 June 1979. Rawlings put Acheampong and Akuffo before a firing squad and organised long-awaited elections two weeks later. The Nkrumahist northerner Hilla Limann (People's National Party) won the elections. Although it was during his administration that the first Konkomba/Nanumba violence erupted, events leading up to this started in the 1960s.

## Youth associations in Nanun

In the early 1960s, as the number of Nanumba literates was increasing, Alhaji Abdulai M. Baba and some others founded the Nanumba Youth Association (NAYA). Youth activism in Nanun was not altogether new. The youth – who were and are usually married middle-age men, who are not yet elders – were and are usually called by the Hausa word *amasachina*, were an active group for dancing, organising communal labour and leading farm groups.

While Nanumba had been hostile to education in the 1930s,<sup>57</sup> Bimbilla Naa Natogmah, who was the chief from 1945 to 1957, sent a significant number of young men, especially sons of chiefs, to schools in the 1950s. As a consequence, most young literates were related to chiefs, particularly to Natogmah's Banyili lineage. These youth were however faced with Bimbilla Naa Dasana (1959-1981) from the Gbugmayili lineage, whose affinity with development and education was minimal. This situation placed the Nanumba Youth Association in an awkward position: Although of chiefly descent themselves, they also saw chieftaincy as something backward. Nanumba youth evaluated some cultural practices as backward, but others as constitutive for their ethnicity, such as *Simpa* dancing.<sup>58</sup> However, several events increasingly tied the NAYA agenda up with chieftaincy, and even with Bimbilla Naa Dasana.

First, NAYA prioritised the re-establishment of Nanumba district as the engine of local development. After Nkrumah was ousted from office, the Nanumba Traditional Council issued a petition to the Government stating that 'Nanumba are a different tribe from Dagombas and we live in a very viable area with a Paramount Chief capable of administering ourselves' (Skalnik 1979: 23). Although the Traditional Council wrote this petition, NAYA was actively involved in this demand. Related to this request was the flaring up of the highly politicised Dagbon chieftaincy dispute, which culminated in the police shooting thirty rioters during the so-called 'Yendi Massacre' days after the inauguration of Busia (who was suspected to have a hand in the affairs) in September 1969. These events stimulated an Nanumba ethnic identity independent from Dagomba and they also resulted in the renewed codification of Nanumba chieftaincy succession regulations (see chapter six) (Skalnik 1987: 307, 312-3).<sup>59</sup>

A second circumstance which linked development to chieftaincy was the Kpasaland affair. As mentioned above, Nkrumah had installed a paramount chief for the Akyode people in the Nkwanta area. This chief, the Shiarewura, claimed Nanun south of the Mo river. This Kpasa area was a formerly uninhabited

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<sup>57</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG8/2/35 'Nanumba Kingdom (1931)', p. 44.

<sup>58</sup> In the mid 1970s, Alhaji T.B. Damba, the son of a Bimbilla palace elder, founded the music group Amasachina (Hausa for youth). He performed in Bimbilla, Tamale and Accra but in Bimbilla he also organised entertainment shows for 'traditional' dances such as Bamaya and Takai, but especially *Simpa*. Much as Highlife musicians absorbed various rural music styles, dubbing them for instance dagomba, around 1930, brass bands playing European Quickstep and Foxtrot and Gold Coastal Highlife had reached the towns of the Northern Territories, particularly Tamale and Yendi. Local musicians combined these with local Dagomba and Hausa music styles to *Simpa*, the local name for the coastal town of Winneba town, one of the birthplaces of Highlife (Collins 1985: 33, 36). *Simpa* performances were youth events, and they grew in popularity as more young people were getting educated. Dagomba *Simpa* bands were often politically active, and so of them got heavily involved in the events leading up to the Yendi Massacre, leading to a temporal suspension of their performances (Collins 1985: 37).

<sup>59</sup> Nanumba Traditional Council (1969) 'Nanumba Customary Regulations and Procedures'.

Nanumba hunting ground of around 1,500 square kilometres which had been administratively separated from Nanun since 1922. The area experienced a Konkomba population boom when a 1965 trunk road connecting Bimbilla and Accra cut through it.<sup>60</sup> As Kpasaland gained economic importance, both Nanumba and Akyode from the Nkwanta area claimed Kpasa.<sup>61</sup> Konkomba, who were the area's first-comers, initially supported Nanumba, but in late 1965, Shiarewura rallied the support of the Konkomba elder of Kpasa.<sup>62</sup> In 1966, amidst regional administrative meetings, Bimbilla Naa Dasana took the Shiarewura to Tamale High Court,<sup>63</sup> and the case continued to be in various courts until 1979 (see below). In July 1974, General Acheampong's restoration of Nanumba district (Skalník 1979: 23) greatly enhanced the Nanumba feeling of independence from Dagbon but it also made the Kpasa affair more tense.

In sum, in the 1970s, Nanumba youth were the main actors in Nanun and their agenda for local development centred on a complex emancipation from Dagomba and simultaneously the definition of Nanun as Nanumba district. However, the biggest challenge to Nanumba emancipation came not from Dagomba or Akyode but, surprisingly, from groups of disparate settlers living inside Nanun: Konkomba.

To understand this process, we have to briefly turn our attention to Saboba, which had become a prime mission station. Missionaries averted the chiefly groups which allegedly inclined to Islam and focused mainly on groups such as Konkomba. The Assemblies of God mission – which had been present in Saboba since the 1930s – had made many converts in Saboba and some communities west of town. In 1962, two Catholic priests from the recently established Yendi parish were part-time delegated to Saboba, where they built the St. Joseph's Technical School (SABTECH) and one of them became the permanent parish priest in 1965. In the same year, Rev. Crast from the United States opened the Evangelical Presbyterian mission in Saboba and had a mission hospital con-

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<sup>60</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.4/97 District Organising Assistant (n.d.) 'Short Report on the Kpassa Land Dispute'.

<sup>61</sup> Already early 1965, Krachi and Yendi DCs had consultations about the Kpasa affairs (PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/14/4-5 DC Kete Krachi to DC Bimbilla (20-03-1965) 'Trespass on Shiare Lands by Bimbillahene'; PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/14/6 DC Bimbilla to DC Kete-Krachi (07-04-1965) 'Trespass on Shiare Lands by Bimbilla-Na'.

<sup>62</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/14/1 Shiarewura to Konja Konkomba (13-12-1965) 'Kpasah Situation'; PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/14/7 Secretary, Nanumba Traditional Council to The District Administrative Officer, Yendi (18-11-1966) 'Meeting with Konja Konkomba'; PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/14/8 Bimbilla-Na to The District Administrative Officer, Yendi (20-08-1966) 'Land dispute between Bimbilla-Na and Shiarewura over Kpasah Village'; PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/14/9 Bimbilla-Na to The District Administrative Officer, Yendi (20-08-1966) 'The end of Bimbilla-Na's land across River Oti'.

<sup>63</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/14/11 District Administrative Officer, Yendi to The Ag Regional Administrative Officer, Tamale (09-09-1966) 'Dispute over Kpasah Village between Bimbilla-Na and Shiare-Wura'; PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/14/17 District Administrative Officer to The Bimbilla-Na (09-01-1967) 'Land dispute between Bimbilla-Na and Shiarewura'.

structed. All three missions made many converts in Saboba and, for the Roman Catholic mission, the villages around Kikpakpaan.

The impact of these facilities on Konkomba should not be underestimated. A crucial additional missionary activity however had an even larger impact: In 1962, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), a Christian organisation from the USA, set up the Ghana Institute of Language, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), and made the Konkomba Literacy Project in Saboba one of its first projects, resulting in a translated New Testament in Likpakpaln in 1977 and, after completing the translated Old Testament, in the first complete mother-tongue Bible in northern Ghana in 1997. The Bible translation project did not only bring the Christian message much closer to many Konkomba, but it also standardised Likpakpaln in a 1981 dictionary based on the Saboba dialect (Steele & Langdon 1981), which greatly enhanced Konkomba ethnic consciousness beyond clan divisions (Kirby 1998; cf. Vail 1989).

Back to Nanun, where until the 1970s, Konkomba, and for that matter Nanumba, were almost absent in local administrative files. But this changed with an emerging group of Konkomba literates in Bimbilla. With primary education compulsory and free of charge for all children under Ghana's first president Nkrumah, there were many educated Konkomba in the 1970s, living in towns like Bimbilla. Realising that Konkomba were completely marginalised politically, administratively and economically in Ghana, despite large numbers and dominance in yam farming, they decided to found the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA, *Bikpakpaam aamòkbaan* or Konkomba unity). The idea of KOYA emerged more or less simultaneously in Saboba and Tamale (and other places), but it was in the latter place that Kenneth Wujangi and Daniel Ngula brought many educated Konkomba (civil servants) together to officially form KOYA and to draw a constitution. KOYA was inaugurated in its headquarters in Saboba during Easter 1977, and Daniel Ngula was elected as the president (1977-1981). With an interest in 'promoting understanding and oneness among Konkombas both at home and abroad; promoting the advancement of both formal and informal education among Konkomba; participating and playing our role in national affairs; exploring avenues of reforming and up-dating some of Konkomba customs and practices according to the dictates of time', KOYA focused on girl child education, like the Improvement Association in the 1950s.<sup>64</sup>

The development agendas of both KOYA and NAYA centred on processes of labelling good and bad 'traditions', i.e. Nanumba *kali* and Konkomba *nkaal*. These concepts roughly meant 'this is how we do things' and hence had overlap-

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<sup>64</sup> KOYA (1981) Memorandum Press Statement Submitted by the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) to His Excellency, the President, Dr. Hilla Limann of his visit to the Northern Region to settle the Nanumba/Konkomba Conflict on Saturday 11th July, 1981.

ping descriptive and normative components. Both Youth Associations distinguished good from bad traditions for their development: Nanumba youth focused on chiefs who were ambivalently the guardians of their traditional identity and backward old men; Konkomba youth focused on the marriage custom of infant girl betrothal which they found socially disruptive and backward, contrary to for example round-dances. Youth claimed from elders the authority to formalize and normalize *kali/nkaal* because they claimed to oversee the process of development. Strikingly, not all backward traditions were age-old: The dramatic decline of Konkomba betrothal marriages led to a popularity of sister exchange marriages, a then novelty which KOYA renounced as backward.

The crucial point here is that although both Konkomba and Nanumba youth were critically looking at their 'traditions', they found that only they had the moral authority to scrap them. Although the marital system of Konkomba was under stress, Konkomba youth did not accept the arbitration of Nanumba chiefs in such cases. Similarly, although Nanumba youth challenged the tribute regulations of chiefs, they did not accept Konkomba to flout these regulations. Lonsdale's theory of ethnicity as split up in a fixed external and a contested internal component helps to understand the paradox of *kali/nkaal* as both contested and politically enforced traditions. This duality, as we will see, triggered mutual conspiracy theories that traditions were used as political mechanisms of exclusion.

### The lead-up to violence (1979-1981)

KOYA's most active branch was that of Bimbilla, led by Ali Kamshegu, a Likpakpaln interpreter at the Bimbilla court, and Batuul, a trader. In Bimbilla, several Konkomba had become successful yam traders and after the re-establishment of the Nanumba district, there emerged a small group of educated Konkomba in town, who interacted with a number of non-educated Konkomba opinion leaders, mostly farmers, around Nanun. Unexpectedly, chieftaincy also became the core issue of the Konkomba youth in Bimbilla. This situation has to be explained by a series of national and local changes in 1979. On the national level, Ghana returned to constitutional democracy after the military intervention of Rawlings. A year earlier, General Acheampong had anticipated such a transition, which would bring along a constitutional recognition of chieftaincy, especially in terms of land tenure. He therefore set up a commission to investigate the customary law of chieftaincy in Northern Ghana. The findings of the so-called

Alhassan committee (Alhassan being the Dagomba committee leader) were implemented in the constitutional recognition of customary law.<sup>65</sup>

KOYA criticised the composition of the committee, because all members were from the chiefly groups, and in vain refused to become subjects of Dagomba again. KOYA claimed a separate traditional area from Dagbon. This claim drew on a hitherto rather latent mutual acknowledgement of Dagomba and Konkomba that Gonja incursions in western Dagbon had led to the Dagomba relocation to the east, in what was then Konkomba land. The Alhassan Committee rejected the KOYA claim, privileging the Dagomba entitlement by right of conquest.

The sense of displacement among Konkomba elites induced by this decision was aggravated by the Nanun section of the report. The recognised Nanumba 'customary law and usage' distinguished indigenous Nanumba from settlers (such as Konkomba), an inequality at odds with equal Ghanaian citizenship which was endorsed in the same constitution. The findings of the Alhassan committee had been descriptive but they took a prescriptive form, as formalized customary law, in the Nanumba Traditional Council.

The report stated that the 'allodium' to land was 'vested' in the paramount chief Bimbilla Naa through his divisional chiefs and sub-chiefs, who had earth priests to perform sacrifices for the fertility and appeasement of the land. 'Citizens' had the right to use land for building if they inform the village chief but also the obligation to assist in the construction or maintenance of the palace. Citizens could use land for farming if they informed the village chief and provided they gave harvest tokens and labour to the chief. Citizens could pick from economic trees, except dawadawa trees, which were owned by the Bimbilla Naa and they could kill game on any land, provided they gave a hind leg (and for lions a skin and for elephants a tusk) to the Bimbilla Naa. All these regulations were extended to 'strangers' who have 'no automatic right of use of lands in Nanumba'. But after being introduced to the chief by an elder and paying him kola nuts, a stranger may use the land 'for as long as he continues to live in Nanumba and does not offend Nanumba customs or display 'bad character or contempt for authority'.

This regulation defined Konkomba settlement in Nanun as a privilege by the grace of their good behaviour, as assessed by Nanumba chiefs. While similar customs were formalised in Dagbon, it was only in Nanun that they became a social reality in the next few years. First, a dramatic event took place in 25 September 1979, when the Stool Lands and Boundary Commission in Accra decided the Kpasa affair between Shiarewura and Bimbilla Naa Dasana in favour

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<sup>65</sup> 'Report on the Committee on Ownership of Lands and Position of Tenants in the Northern and Upper Regions' (1978).

of the latter.<sup>66</sup> Directly after this verdict, Bimbilla Naa Dasana enskinned several chiefs in the area, who invented new chieftaincy titles and renamed their villages accordingly, much to the discontent of the local Konkomba communities.<sup>67</sup>

In November 1979, a second event happened in Bimbilla. Here, KOYA had blamed Konkomba underdevelopment on their backwardness, especially on the traditional marriage system of betrothing baby girls. Facing the opposition of elders to eradicate betrothal, KOYA emphasized education, particularly of girls, to shape the context for social change. KOYA however realized that not only Konkomba but also Nanumba traditions hindered Konkomba emancipation. Unlike most other areas where Konkomba lived, Konkomba in Nanun were compelled to bring their cases to Nanumba chiefs, who acted as brokers for the magistrate. Both chiefs and magistrate were usually unfamiliar with Konkomba customs but most were also corrupt. Ali Kamshiegu – who was a translator at the magistrate’s court – witnessed this and in consultation with the other KOYA members in Bimbilla, he started arbitrating Konkomba marital cases in late 1979.

Bimbilla Naa Dasana, who had maintained good personal relationships with Ali, was outraged when he heard about this and saw it as undermining his sovereignty. He asked the district and regional administration to stop the ‘secret tribunals’ and remove Ali from the district,<sup>68</sup> but when no administrative intervention came, the chief gave Ali an ultimatum to stop his arbitration. The ultimatum transpired two weeks later in January 1980 and a group of Nanumba youth led by one Ponado (the local PNP chairman) went to Ali’s house, forced him and his eldest son Abukari to board a tractor and dumped them at Makayili village outside Bimbilla (Skalnik 1983: 21). Only after Bimbilla Naa Dasana publicly condemned the tractor incident, Ali returned to Bimbilla and continued his arbitration. The national KOYA executives, who were surprised by the heated Nanumba reaction, rallied behind Ali and sent a letter to all Konkomba communities in Nanun, telling them to choose their own leaders and refusing to pay tribute to Nanumba chiefs. While few Konkomba communities actually chose their own leaders, most stopped paying tribute to the local Nanumba chief and

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<sup>66</sup> Essiem, (SGD.) J.K. (25-09-1979) ‘In the Stool Lands Boundaries Settlement Commission Sitting at the Meeting Room 4 State House, Accra on Tuesday the 25th Day of September, 1979, Before Mr. J.K. Essiem, Deputy Commissioner; Enquiry No: 13/75, In the matter of boundary dispute between Nanumba (N.R.) and Shiare (V.R.)’; NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.4/97 District Organising Assistant (n.d.) ‘Short Report on the Kpassa Land Dispute’. Shiarewura had appealed to the Sunyani High Court twice; he lost the first appeal and the second appeal was referred to the Stool Lands and Boundary Commission.

<sup>67</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG1/2/13/86 Bimbilla Naa Dasana Abdulai to The Registrar, Northern Region House of Chiefs (08-06-1972) ‘Petition Against the Local Government Report 1972 as Affects the Nanumba Local Council’.

<sup>68</sup> Sulemana, (Sgd) K.S. for MP Nanumba Constituency to The Regional Minister (23-11-1979) ‘Batu’s Secret Tribunals and Military Molestation’, Akapule (n.d., b).

numerous Konkomba also bypassed the Nanumba yam marketing network, by directly bringing their produce to Accra.

Over 1980, this situation rendered Nanun so tense that the District Chief Executive (DCE) warned for violence in his February 1981 monthly report but after personally assessing the situation in Nanun, President Limann fired the DCE for creating panic (op. cit.: 21). Limann however gave ambivalent signals to Nanun: When Bimbilla Naa Dasana told him about the subversive activities of 'some aliens' in Kpasaland, the President replied that 'nobody is alien in Ghana', but two weeks later, during the 6 March 1981 Independence celebrations, Limann decorated Bimbilla Naa Dasana with the Grand Medal (Skalník 1983: 21-23). In this context, KOYA (under its new President Kenneth Wujangi) summoned Bimbilla Naa Dasana to Tamale High Court to defend the constitutional right of free settlement for Ali. In spite of the Bimbilla Naa's appeal to Ali to have the case withdrawn, the annual KOYA Easter Convention in Saboba endorsed the summon in the weekend of 19 April. Three days after Ali's return to Bimbilla and his informing the Bimbilla chief about the KOYA endorsement, there was open violence in Bimbilla, Damanko and Kpasa, the intensity and scale of which surprised everyone in Nanun and throughout Ghana (cf. Fogelberg 1982; Skalník 1983).

## Conclusion

In this chronology, we have seen how during the British administration of Native Authorities, Nanun explicitly became a Nanumba traditional area, but one which was overrun by Konkomba settlers. This colonial paradox, assuming that each tribe had its territory while simultaneously encouraging the migration of tribes, is far from peculiar for Nanun (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000), but its scale and intensity is unprecedented in Ghana. Consequently, the British obsession with traditional order under indirect rule, which I discussed above, has always been fictional. Yet, the quest for the 'original' situation in Northern Ghana strikingly returned in the emancipation agendas of Youth Associations. Contrary to 1931, when officer Amherst found no local voices in Nanun, these Youth Associations raised their voices in the public realm.

Their voices have to be understood in the context of the 1979 Constitution. Konkomba and Nanumba were subjects under chiefs, not citizens, between 1931 and 1951 and citizens of the Gold Coast and later Ghana from 1951 onwards. Brief periods of civil rule in the 1960s aside, the 1979 Constitution marked another significant change in the status of Konkomba and Nanumba in Nanun; they were simultaneously citizens of Ghana and subjects of the Bimbilla Naa. The nation-state again delegated part of its sovereignty to what it considered

traditional rulers. However, as seen, such traditional rule had undergone significant reconfigurations.

Nanun had changed; Konkomba had become a demographic and economic majority and their educated youth considered the subject position of Konkomba to Nanumba chiefs a degradation. Konkomba youth were struggling to overcome the marital cases which disrupted many Konkomba communities and they demanded the moral authority from Nanumba chiefs to resolve them. As Konkomba installed their own leader to try such cases, Nanumba tried to impose customs on them, which Nanumba themselves were challenging internally. In reaction, the moral ethnicity of both Konkomba and Nanumba turned to political tribalism, running along the axis of rights as citizens and duties as subjects. Konkomba claimed moral freedom but Nanumba responded that this is not possible since they lived on Nanumba land. Nanumba expelled the Konkomba leader after which KOYA went to High Court to get free settlement right confirmed.

As we have seen, 1979 was a year of legalization: Apart from the adoption of the Constitution, Bimbilla Naa won his court case into the Kpasa issue and Konkomba in Bimbilla set up their independent tribunals. Both sides considered their position justified by law and rallied for government support. But as President Limann gave ambiguous signals to both parties, the Bimbilla Naa eventually used his sovereignty to remove KOYA activists from Bimbilla. This act immediately became ethnic, ignited simmering stereotypes and generated a huge explosion of violence. How it did so will be studied next.

## Armed conflict and reconciliation (1981-1996)

*'We decry the spiral of arms and ammunition build-up in the Northern Region and affirm our readiness and determination to stem their flow into the region' (clause 12)*

*'We declare that we shall co-operate fully in bringing about and facilitating a complete reconciliation of our people in accordance with the tenets and practices of our traditions. We note in particular the restriction on the movement of our peoples in Nanun and all the other areas in the Region and agree that we shall implement appropriate measures as may be found efficacious to ease the problem' (clause 4).*

### Introduction

This chapter studies the epoch of violence and non-violence in Nanun and how security and reconciliation interventions have, or have not, put an end to this enmity. As seen in the previous chapter, there had been a Konkomba/Nanumba conflict since 1979, one which turned extremely violent in April 1981. Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence was not very warm at that time and, as I described, both stereotyped and morally rejected the other. Nanumba often spoke of Konkomba as 'bush people', while the latter found Nanumba feudal. However, it was due to mutual accusations of degrading illegal actions, since the year of legalization in 1979, that violence erupted. So while Konkomba/ Nanumba

coexistence has been shrouded in mutual sentiments of exploitation – Konkomba exhaust the land, while Nanumba are feudal – have just been a latent condition for victimhood about what they considered the illegal subordination of their autochthony or citizen equality. The link between accusations of illegal action of the other and a violent reaction to counter such accusations, as introduced by referring to Appadurai (1998) and Mamdani (2001) in chapter one, will be scrutinized in this chapter.

KOYA had set up an independent tribunal, and the Bimbilla Naa reacted by removing the Konkomba leader Ali from Bimbilla. Thereupon, KOYA went to High Court to defend the right of free settlement and the Bimbilla Naa removed the KOYA activists in Bimbilla, which involved the entire Konkomba community. The next day, Konkomba chased away all Nanumba from south-eastern Nanun, where Konkomba had rejected Nanumba leadership. After the death of the old Bimbilla Naa, Nanumba youth activists launched an expedition to restore Nanumba sovereignty in the southeast and ethnic cleansing spread throughout all southern Nanun. Both sides countered the supposed constitutional paradox: Nanumba chiefs chased Konkomba from Bimbilla town, after which Konkomba rejected Nanumba authority in the Kpasa area. The violence was no *de jure* sovereignty because the state of Ghana holds the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, but with the state response slow, it was an exercise of *de facto* sovereignty, as ‘the ability to kill, punish and discipline with impunity’ (Hansen & Stepputat 2006: 296). In chapter one, I argued with Skalník that the Nanun violence was a new experience for both Konkomba and Nanumba.

When violence actually broke out, there were four crucial transformations. First, there was a massive process whereby individual Konkomba and Nanumba closed their ranks and fought each other as an collective ethnic enemy. Second, this violence was not just the breakdown of law and order in Ghana’s Third Republic but the installation of an alternative order of security based on ethnic cleansing. Third, after the violence, Youth Associations became not just the emancipators but also the main spokesmen of both ethnic groups and fourth, written claims became the main form in which they addressed the conflict issues.

There was a significant difference between the 1981 and 1994 violence. While the 1981 violence started with the exercise of a seemingly traditional but invented sovereignty, this war introduced something new: Nanumba victimhood. This was not just because Nanumba were defeated, but because Konkomba came together as warriors, something which Nanumba had never foreseen and therefore treated as a conspiracy. There was a strange situation of Konkomba victors who continued to feel exploited and Nanumba victims trying to recapture their sovereignty. Victimhood justified both positions and this was an tense situation which exploded in 1994 and 1995, until the NGO Consortium brokered a peace

agreement whereby Konkomba and Nanumba would not be the victims of each other but rather survivors in Mamdani's vocabulary (see chapter one), or 'brothers in development' in the peace accord terminology.

This chapter studies the intermittent escalations and de-escalations of the Konkomba/Nanumba conflict between 1981 and 1996 and how various actors tried to create security without violence. This chapter offers the historical background to clauses twelve and four which respectively contain a pledge to abstain from picking up arms and to hold a traditional reconciliation between them.

## The 1981 violence

On 23 April 1981, Bimbilla Naa Dasana's son Mamadu, came to the house of Ali Kamshiegu and made words with the latter's son Abukari over a Nanumba girl they allegedly both loved. As Abukari stabbed Mamadu with a knife, Mamadu fled, to return with Nanumba youth who were beating war drums and chanting war songs. Miraculously, Ali and other KOYA members who had gathered there escaped in various directions, while others sought refuge in the E.P. Training College on the northern outskirts of town. That night, at least seven people died in Bimbilla, including the personal secretary of the Bimbilla Naa and the son of the Konkomba community leader of Damanko.

The following morning, youth and Nanumba *kambonsi* warriors, led by their leader from Jilo village, attacked Kabuliya, the nearest Konkomba community. Special groups of Nanumba autochthons are warriors, notably those in Jilo, Pusuga and Ganguyili communities which compete for the 'chief warrior' title Kambon Naa Kpema. The warrior organisation was copied from Asante military organisation during the period that Nanun was in the sphere in influence of Asante (1744-1874) (*kamboŋa* means 'southerner'; cf. Benzing 1971: 185; Prost 1980).

Meanwhile, Konkomba in the Kpasa area attacked all local Nanumba, especially in Damanko where the Konkomba leader was informed about the death of his son in the nocturnal Bimbilla riots. Although police and military in Bimbilla were aware of the Damanko violence, they could not intervene without permission from far-away Ho, the capital of the Volta Region in which Damanko was located (Skalník 1983: 22). The Damanko violence was initially hushed up in the media, but later reports spoke of as many 600 casualties in Damanko, including four chiefs, and at least 1000 Nanumba fled to Accra.<sup>1</sup> The next days, Nanumba attacked the Konkomba communities between Bimbilla and Damanko and cleansed the villages on the road between Bimbilla and Chamba.

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<sup>1</sup> WA (01-06-1981) 'More on the Bimbilla fighting'; GT (30-04-1981) 'Nanumba Youth Calls For Peace'.

These days of violence gave way to incidental ambushing throughout the subsequent two months, despite warnings from the Regional Minister, who visited Bimbilla and Chamba in May.<sup>2</sup> The Kpasa issue utterly divided Nanumba leadership between belligerent youth leaders on the one hand and elders and ex-politicians who opposed further violence on the other hand. Bimbilla Naa Dasana was under serious stress constraints and when both he and one of his prominent chiefs (Kpatihi Naa) died – some say under suicidal circumstances – on 31 May, the youth faction took the lead. On 19 June, just before a meeting between KOYA and NAYA mediated by the Regional Administration in Tamale, Nanumba warriors and youth crossed the Oti River east of Bimbilla, trying to get access to Kpasa. After chasing Konkomba from a handful of communities, they ran into a strong Konkomba counterattack and had to retreat. The simultaneous molestation of a Konkomba man at the Wulensi roadblock started a chain reaction of violence: Konkomba from surrounding villages tried to attack Nanumba in Wulensi and vice versa.

Most Nanumba in Chamba fled to Bimbilla overnight when they heard about the Wulensi situation. When Konkomba in Chamba saw wounded persons fleeing from the Wulensi area at daybreak, they organised under Biyenjin, the local KOYA member, and killed three Nanumba men who had stayed behind. The same day, Konkomba from Chamba burnt down Dakpam village, killing at least nine people, and after that they proceeded to Wulensi. They had to retreat due to heavy downpours. Early next morning they and Konkomba from surrounding villages completely wiped out Wulensi, a town of 3000 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> Over five hundred corpses were buried by security agencies who feared that hundreds of missing Nanumba were also killed in the bush. The ten policemen in Wulensi only managed to throw some smoke bombs to rescue the chief from his palace. Although Konkomba initially respected the police station as a sanctuary, they fired into the police station when a Nanumba man hiding there shot back at Konkomba.<sup>4</sup> In the police station alone, more than hundred bodies were found. Konkomba casualties were usually taken home. The next day, Konkomba burnt nearby Nanumba settlements and surrounded Bimbilla, only to be stopped by a military enforcement from Tamale, causing many Konkomba to say that ‘the army saved Nanumba’. This ended the fighting, which never reached the northern parts of Nanun.

The violence was of a shocking intensity, involving thousands of people who had previously lived together in relative peace. My interlocutors remembered that ‘something comes over you’. The violence was a communal affair: The dominant

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<sup>2</sup> DG (13-05-1981) ‘Live in Peace – Harruna’.

<sup>3</sup> DG (26-06-1981) ‘Wulensi – The Ghost Town’; WA (13-07-1981) ‘Violence in Bambilla’.

<sup>4</sup> WA (20-07-1981) Patti Waldmeir ‘Causes of fighting in Ghana’.

form of warfare was the surrounding of a village and burning it down, Konkomba being enticed by yelling women and the blowing of the announcement horn (*ukpiin*), Nanumba by beating *dondo* drums and *gongong* bells. In principle women and girls were spared, but fire and bullets shot from a distance were not gender-sensitive. Although no-one was forced to fight, only 'cowards' and boys stayed behind. Apart from fire, the main weapons used were single barrel guns (*singal*, LIK also *kidabuk*), previously used for hunting, cutlasses (machetes) and bow and arrows. The violence commoditised the use of fire weapons, which were hitherto sanctioned by age in Konkomba and descent in Nanumba society.

### The inter-bellum period

Up to 1500 or 2000 people may have died in the violence; there were 15,000 refugees in Bimbilla town and a further 50,000 refugees, mostly Nanumba, in Accra and Tamale.<sup>5</sup> Government designated the Nanumba district a disaster area, banned the possession of arms and chartered the Ghana Air Forces to fly in food aid for the refugees in Bimbilla.<sup>6</sup>

The conflict made headlines for weeks and even if few newspapers trickled down to Nanun, they shaped public debates and interventions. Media blamed the Northern Regional administration and President Limann for underestimating the conflict,<sup>7</sup> which Government officials called a 'clash' but which some journalists called 'civil war', and which the Asante paramount chief Asantehene called 'a threat to the nation'.<sup>8</sup> The media seemed to be supportive of Konkomba as victims of feudal Nanumba, despite MP Marshall Adam saying in parliament that Konkomba were a 'sociological problem' for their violent inclinations.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> GT (25-07-1981) 'The Konkomba-Nanumba War...The remote causes'; WA (20-07-1981) Patti Waldmeir 'Causes of fighting in Ghana'; GT (30-04-1981) 'Nanumba youth calls for peace'; DG (02-07-1981) 'Konkomba-Nanumba Clash – 160 So Far Dead'.

<sup>6</sup> DG (08-07-1981) 'Govt Bans Arms in 3 Districts'; GT (08-07-1981) 'Nanumba area now disaster zone'; respectively DG (09-07-1981) 'Flights suspended'; GT (08-08-1981) 'Red Cross drugs for Nanumba area'.

<sup>7</sup> In a Daily Graphic editorial, President Limann was charged to 'act now' before violence would spread to adjacent areas, such as parts of Gonja and Dagbon (DG (16-06-1981) 'Konkomba Youth Protest'; See also DG (18-06-1981) 'Allegation is untrue'; DG (27-06-1981) 'Kpandai – The Next 'Hot Spot'').

<sup>8</sup> DG (23-07-1981) 'Lessons for all who love peace'; 'Address by the Northern Regional Minister Alhaji Ibraiman Harruna at the Inauguration of the Nanumba Konkomba Clash Victims Rehabilitation Appeal Fund Committee at the Cultural Centre, Tamale on Saturday, 27th June 1981' (27-06-1981) (in: Akapule (n.d., b)); respectively DG (10-07-1981) 'Otumfuo: Conflict is threat to nation'; DG (13-07-1981) 'Be alive to your responsibilities'; DG (23-07-1981) 'Lessons for all who love peace'.

<sup>9</sup> DG (18-09-1981) 'Incident at Pito Bar Sparked-Off Fighting'; GT (25-07-1981) 'The Konkomba-Nanumba War ... The remote causes'; respectively DG (02-07-1981) 'Konkomba-Nanumba Clash – 160 So Far Dead'; 'Statement of the Nanumba-Konkomba Affair by M.A. Adam, Member of Parliament for Nanumba' (06-07-1981).

On 11 July, three weeks after the Wulensi bloodbath, President Limann visited Bimbilla and he even spent the night there. After separately consulting Nanumba and Konkomba elders – both who were suspicious of Limann’s loyalties – he organised a reconciliation ceremony in Kpandai at which he was critical of chieftaincy. He said that outdated traditions would have to be scrapped,<sup>10</sup> but he did not specify who would have the sovereignty to do this scrapping. With Bimbilla Naa Dasana dead and all local KOYA members fled, President Limann made Mamadu Dasana, who had become the Bimbilla regent, and Nana Nandi – an influential Konkomba chief in the Krachi area – shake hands.<sup>11</sup>

Mamadu Dasana gave a speech in which he called the conflict ‘our price for accepting Konkombas as brothers and sisters’. He narrated that Konkomba settled in Nanun after the murder on the Dagomba chief of Zagbeli forty years earlier and that Nanumba received them well, because ‘settlement of strangers in one’s land is a sign of luck’. However, since 1979, KOYA executives rejected the authority of Nanumba chiefs without publicly presenting their grievances to them. He continued that ‘[a]ll Ghanaians will agree with me that every society has its customs and wherever one goes he has to observe the customs of the people he puts up with’ and he stipulated that Nanumba customs were non-discriminatory.<sup>12</sup> He argued that Konkomba were performing illegal arbitration and they wanted to secede from Nanun. They used false allegations to get their case across, but Nanumba were silent because ‘[h]e that is at fault talks much and we were quiet because we wanted them to reach the end of their lies’. He continued that ‘We regard this as a war on the Republic of Ghana and not Nanumbas. [...] Dogs and pigs feasted on human flesh in civilized Ghana.’

National KOYA representatives also made reference to the laws of Ghana: Describing the ‘denial of basic human freedoms and rights’ to Konkomba.<sup>13</sup> According to KOYA, Konkomba were not interested in secession from Ghana, nor in land or chieftaincy, but they only wanted an end to their customary exploitation in Nanun, which had been bolstered by Nanumba influence in the regional administration and the army. KOYA blamed the Regional Minister, who was a Nanumba, for knocking the heads of Konkomba and Nanumba together, and they

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<sup>10</sup> DG (20-07-1981) ‘Scrap outmoded customs – Limann’; cf. WA (27-07-1981) ‘President Limann criticises chiefs’.

<sup>11</sup> DG (14-07-1981) ‘Konkombas, Nanumbas to smoke peace pipe’; WA (20-07-1981) ‘Nanumbas and Konkombas reconciled’.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Speech by Mahama Dasana, Regent of Bimbilla on the Occasion of the Visit of His Excellency Dr. Hilla Limann, President of the Republic of Ghana to Bimbilla on Sunday, 11th July, 1981’.

<sup>13</sup> KOYA (1981) ‘Memorandum Press Statement Submitted by the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) to His Excellency, the President, Dr. Hilla Limann of His Visit to the Northern Region to Settle the Nanumba/Konkomba Conflict on Saturday 11th July, 1981’.

said that Nanumba started the violence in Bimbilla. In sum, both KOYA and the Bimbilla regent blamed each other's backwardness.<sup>14</sup>

After the ceremony, President Limann passed through Chamba and saw fully armed Konkomba warriors.<sup>15</sup> Many surrendered their weapons, and Limann brought the chief of Chamba (Naa Alhaji) with him to shake hands with the Konkomba leader Bijiba, after which a joint libation of sorghum beer (*pito*) was performed and Konkomba performed a round-dance. Most Nanumba from Chamba however stayed on in Bimbilla, mainly in the western quarter of Dangbeyili, and only some returned home after the rainy season (see chapter four).

Back in Accra, Limann sacked Northern Regional Minister Haruna and installed a Committee of Inquiry, chaired by Justice Lamptey. Two weeks after the reconciliation ceremony, regent Mamadu Dasana specified to three conditions of peace to the Committee: The return of cattle, stoppage of foodstuff destruction and free passage of peasants to their farms.<sup>16</sup>

Although trade between Konkomba and Nanumba resumed within months after the violence, the social geography of Nanun had drastically changed. No Konkomba lived in Bimbilla and Wulensi anymore, Kpasa and Damanko were off bounds for Nanumba and Chamba emerged as the main Konkomba town of Nanun. Wulensi survivors gave their ruined houses to the bush and built a new town a few hundred metres away. The main outcome of the conflict was the overwhelming defeat of Nanumba, who were surprised by the joint strength of the allegedly disparate Konkomba communities. Nanumba lost Kpasa land and the authority of their chiefs and they realised that they were a minority in their own district.

Another consequence of the 1981 conflict was that Konkomba bypassed the Nanumba yam middlemen. In 1981, the few yam-selling Konkomba in Accra were driven out of the Nanumba/Dagbamba dominated Timber Market in Accra, which by then was the country's main yam market. Directly after the conflict, the Saboba MP, Nana Nandi (the chief in Krachi district) and several KOYA leaders acquired a portion of land for a Konkomba yam market (*Bikpakpaannyon*), which soon eclipsed the nearby Timber Market.

As both sides awaited the results of the Commission of Inquiry, Flight Lieutenant J.J. Rawlings ousted Limann on New Year's Eve 1981 and in one of his first speeches on national radio, Rawlings blamed the waning Limann administration for the Konkomba/Nanumba conflict.<sup>17</sup> He dismissed the Commission of

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<sup>14</sup> It is unclear whether there was a sacrifice at the reconciliation ceremony, but Konkomba elders from Chamba told me that a Bimbilla sacrifice was performed and that the President gave a cow to the chief imam.

<sup>15</sup> DG (14-07-1981) 'Konkombas, Nanumbas to smoke peace pipe'.

<sup>16</sup> GT (24-07-1981) 'Nanumba Regent's 3 Conditions For Peace'.

<sup>17</sup> WA (11-01-1982) 'Bringing the people into decision-making'.

Inquiry and removed the army from Nanun. Rawlings' 'revolution' soon pushed the Konkomba/Nanumba conflict into national oblivion, leaving it to simmer locally. During these silent years, Konkomba did not perform any tribute to Nanumba chiefs and they continued to install their own leaders, while Nanumba youth increasingly got allied to the chiefs; since 1981, NAYA organised its annual meetings simultaneously with the most important Damba chieftaincy festival.

Rawlings' Qaddafi-like 'revolution' was initially not favourable to chiefs: Rawlings wanted to built his revolution on the masses and not on old men in palaces. In 1982, People's Defence Committees (PDCs) had to replace the district administrative apparatus, but the semi-literate 'boys' of the PDCs had little to no local authority in Nanun (Skalník 1992: 198). Although the PDCs were abolished after a few years, many 'boys' had learnt how to use a gun in the meantime. In 1983, Rawlings accepted a series of Structural Adjustment Programmes from the International Monetary Fund, later joined by the World Bank and in 1984 he established a National Commission for Democracy, which advised a restoration of chieftaincy in the administrative system, which was implemented in 1986 (Skalník 1992: 195). District administration was re-established in 1988, but it was not until 1992 that Ghana returned to constitutional multiparty democracy.

In Nanun, the youth associations attempted to resolve the silenced issues of the 1981 violence in late 1984 and early 1985. The main Nanumba youth conditions for peace were that Konkomba considered themselves subjects of the Nanumba chiefs, which KOYA accepted, provided that Konkomba could choose their own local leadership and that such leaders be recognised by the Bimbilla Naa as Konkomba representatives. Moreover, KOYA asked for the Konkomba citizenship right to politically and administratively represent the district (Skalník 1989: 165; 2002: 162-163).<sup>18</sup> NAYA, after passing the Konkomba proposals on to the Nanumba Traditional Council, rejected these requests in August 1986 (Skalník 1992: 202).

Three years later, in June 1989, the District Secretary reported rumours of potential Konkomba/Nanumba violence in and around Juanayili over fishing rights.<sup>19</sup> When KOYA made a tour through Nanun in June 1989, rumours came from all corners of Nanun that a new conflict was about to begin, but they found

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<sup>18</sup> Wujangi, Kenneth *et al.* (KOYA) to The Permanent Negotiation Team (September 1994) 'Konkomba Position Paper on Conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana – With Reference to Nanumba-Konkomba Conflicts'.

<sup>19</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.3/21 PNDC District Secretary to The PNDC Regional Secretary (14-06-1989) 'Report on Rumour of Revival of Nanumba Konkomba Conflict in Nanumba District'; NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.3/29 PNDC District Secretary to The PNDC Regional Secretary (05-07-1989) 'Situation Report – Re: Konkomba Nanumba Conflict'.

no clues.<sup>20</sup> In November 1989, Nanumba in Dipa village found the carcass of a black cow with arrows on it. Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II blamed Konkomba for spoiling the land, demanded sacrifices to pacify the land spirits and the banishment of the perpetrators.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, there were rumours of a new Konkomba/Nanumba conflict, starting from Wulensi, Chamba or Kpasa.<sup>22</sup> KOYA and NAYA held a series of meetings in 1989 and 1990,<sup>23</sup> and so did the joint District Security Councils of Nanumba and Nkwanta district. At one of these meetings, Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II recognised the Konkomba right to settle in Kpasaland.<sup>24</sup> However, Nanumba continued to claim the area and in 1991, Juali Naa installed one Nanumba Chicheli Naa as the Damanko chief, but this chief never settled in Damanko.<sup>25</sup>

### Stimuli from Gonja and Dagbon

Although the 1994 violence started in Nanun, it spread over the entire eastern half of the Northern Region within two days. The Konkomba/Nanumba conflict of 1994 has to be understood in the context of events since 1991 in adjacent East Gonja and East Dagbon, where respectively Nawuri called for a separate district and Konkomba demanded a separate traditional council.

The Gonja area is ethnically heterogeneous and when the Gonja Youth Association changed its name into Gonjaland Youth Association in 1991, many ethnic minorities interpreted this as a territorial claim, especially Nawuri who claimed autochthony to Kpandai town (Bogner 2000: 190-191). After a disputed plot allocation in this town between Nawuri residents and the town's Gonja chief in April 1991, Gonja warriors chased all Nawuri from Kpandai but in June, Nawuri

<sup>20</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.3/42 Org. Secr. KOYA to The Regional PNDC Secretary (26-06-1989) 'Report on the Peace Talk Trip Made to Bimbilla District by 'KOYA' Three Man Delegation Headed by Anthony Adam Bukari 21st – 25th June 1989'.

<sup>21</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.4/6 Bimbilla-Na Abarika Attah II to The PNDC District Secretary (15-01-1990) 'Request for the Banishment of Seven Families'.

<sup>22</sup> NDA/P/28/Vol.2/2 BNI/Bimbilla to BNI/N.R. (23-08-1988) 'PNDC D/S Nanumba'; respectively NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.3/53 Zonal Org. Asst. Wulensi to The PNDC District Secretary (09-11-1989) 'Rumour about Konkomba/Nanumba Conflict'.

<sup>23</sup> NDA/E/11/vol.2/57 Secretary Nanumba Youth Association to KOYA President (11-01-1990) 'Joint NYA-KOYA Executive Meeting on 13th January at Bimbilla'; NDA/E/11/vol.2/56 Secretary Nanumba Youth Association to The PNDC District Secretary (09-01-1990) 'Joint NYA and KOYA Executives Meeting 13th January, 1990'; NDA/E/11/vol.2/49 Secretary Nanumba Youth Association to The PNDC District Secretary (15-12-1989) 'Joint Meeting of KOYA Executives and NYA Executives'.

<sup>24</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.3/1 ASPCL/Bimbilla to PNDC Dist. Secretary (30-02-1988) 'Police Message'; NDA/CONF/3/n.n. 'Minutes of Joint D.I.S.E.C.S. of Nkwanta and Bimbilla Districts Held at Nkwanta on 20th-21st July, 1989'; NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.4/n.n. 'Minutes of Joint DISEC Meeting between Nkwanta and Nanumba Districts of the Northern and Volta Regions from 22nd-24th February, 1990'.

<sup>25</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.4/n.n. Ag. PNDC Regional Secretary (Volta) to The PNDC Regional Secretary, Northern Region (25-02-1991) 'Re: Damanko Chieftaincy Affairs'.

retook the town. Konkomba, who were a demographic majority in the Kpandai vicinity, had stayed neutral until two Konkomba men were hit by Gonja fire (probably incidentally). In May 1992, Konkomba came in direct confrontation with Gonja, and this eventually eclipsed the Nawuri case. While Konkomba defeated Gonja in the area around Kpandai, they were forced to flee from Western and Central Gonja.<sup>26</sup>

Kpandai is only ten kilometres south of Nanun and especially Chamba, which had emerged as a Konkomba stronghold after 1981, received many refugees, while hundreds of Chamba residents took up arms to Gonja.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, throughout 1992 and 1993, the Konkomba/Gonja violence fed conspiracy theories of an upcoming large conflict between chiefly and non-chiefly ethnic groups of the Northern Region. In Tamale, leaflets circulated warning for new Konkomba attacks on Kpandai and on the future Konkomba takeover of Bimbilla and Yendi (Bogner 1996: 169, ff; 2000: 191).<sup>28</sup>

It was in this context, and only months after Ghana's return to civil rule, that in June 1993, KOYA sent a petition to the National House of Chiefs asking to upgrade the Saboba chief, who had been reluctantly installed by Dagomba in 1989, to paramount status with a separate traditional area.<sup>29</sup> Redirected by the House of Chiefs, KOYA sent a slightly adapted version to the Ya Na (Dagomba paramount chief) in October.<sup>30</sup> The KOYA petitioners, claiming to represent all Konkomba and calling on the truth in the name of 'Mother Ghana', wrote that their 'denied traditional Independence' had 'rendered Ghana's Independence from the British in 1957 meaningless to them'. Their call for an independent paramount chieftaincy, could be misinterpreted by some, but it would only stimulate northern development.

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<sup>26</sup> The Government reacted to the 1991 violence by setting up a Committee of Inquiry, but its recommendations, granting autonomy to Nawuri, were never implemented (Bogner 2000: 190; Schmid 2001: 29).

<sup>27</sup> NDA/INT/13/21 Assemblyman Sabonjida to The District Chief Executive (25-05-1992) 'A Report from Sabonjida'.

<sup>28</sup> One pamphlet, the authenticity of which must be seriously doubted, showed that Konkomba were involved in a separatist movement: 'The National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland' (06-06-1989) (in: Akapule (n.d., b)).

<sup>29</sup> Uchabobor *et al* to The President, National House of Chiefs (29-06-1993) 'Petition of Chief, Elders and the Youth of Konkomba Land to the National House of Chiefs for the Creation of Paramount Stool for Konkomba Land to be Known as 'Ukpakpanbur'. On the 1989 installation, see Kotin, A.T.O. (Chief's Secretary) to The President, Eastern Dagomba Traditional Council (07-05-1989); Ya-Na Yakubu II to Bowan Kwadin (12-06-1989) 'Notice of Nomination, Election and Installation of Chabob-Bor, Ubor Bowan Kwadin of Saboba – Your Letter Dated 7th May 1989'.

<sup>30</sup> Wujangi, Kenneth (KOYA) to The Ya-Na (19-10-1993) 'Petition for the Creation of a Paramountcy Stool for Konkomba Land to be Known as 'Ukpakpanbur'.

Three days later, the Dagomba paramount chief Ya Na firmly rejected the KOYA request.<sup>31</sup> Calling Konkomba acephalous, nomadic and Togolese,<sup>32</sup> he denied KOYA claims of indigeneity and demographic dominance in northern Ghana. He also renounced cultural-linguistic difference as a valid criterion for paramount chieftaincy and KOYA's statement that Konkomba subjection to Dagomba chiefs was a colonial invention. The Ya Na made reference to David Tait to prove that Konkomba were 'among the auccessful [sic] societies'.

Even though KOYA petitioner Kenneth Wujangi gave safety assurances on a 6 November press conference in Accra,<sup>33</sup> many Dagomba, but also Gonja and Nanumba, feared a Konkomba revolt. Government representatives made several attempts in late 1993 to mediate in the conflict but these failed because all parties were suspicious of Rawlings: Konkomba saw the Government as the protector of the 'majority' groups, while the latter blamed Rawlings for personally setting Konkomba and other non-chiefly groups up against them.<sup>34</sup> The best example of failed Government mediation was the 1 December speech of the Presidential Advisor on Chieftaincy Affairs in the Northern Region House of Chiefs, in which he warned the chiefs that Government would not allow individuals to use chieftaincy for causing trouble, after which he was attacked by a Dagomba mob outside the building.<sup>35</sup>

## The 1994 violence

On 19 October 1993, the Nanumba Traditional Council held an emergency meeting on the KOYA petition.<sup>36</sup> Although KOYA did not ask paramount chieftaincy from Nanumba, Nanun had been tense throughout 1993.<sup>37</sup> In January, a

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<sup>31</sup> Dagomba Traditional Council to The President of the National House of Chiefs, through the Northern Regional House of Chiefs (22-10-1993).

<sup>32</sup> At that time anti-Togo sentiments were rife in Ghana. For years, Rawlings had maintained extremely poor relations with Eyadéma, but in January 1994, international relations between Ghana and Togo almost escalated when the Togolese army killed over 40 Ghanaians smugglers at the southern border (GT (11-01-1994) 'Carnage at the Border'; GT (22-01-1994) 'Obed: 40 Ghanaians Killed So Far By Togolese Forces').

<sup>33</sup> Wujangi, Kenneth (06-11-1993) 'Press Statement of the Konkomba Youth Association'. When The Ghanaian Chronicle warned for imminent bloodbath in the north in its 31 October edition, vans with speakers had to drive through Tamale to calm down the city (Bogner 2000: 192).

<sup>34</sup> Rumours circulated about a speech from Rawlings in Tamale in 1991, during which he was reported to have said that 'No one came to the world with a piece of land' (The Statesman (20-02-1994) 'Northern Region On Fire').

<sup>35</sup> DG (28-06-1993) 'Government is interested in stability of chieftaincy – Sarpong'; GT (02-12-1993) 'Chiefs Urged to Accept Changes'; DG (03-12-1993) 'Sarpong calls for committee to study Chieftaincy Problems in N.R.'.

<sup>36</sup> NDA/L/11/v.3/78 Registrar Nanumba Council to All Chiefs Nanumba Traditional Area (12-10-1993) 'Summons to an Emergency Meeting of Chiefs – Nanumba Traditional Area'.

<sup>37</sup> NDA/P/20/vol.4/16 (10-05-1994) District Admin. Officer 'Quarterly Report for the 1st Quarter from 1st January – 31st March 1994, of the Nanumba District Assembly'.

Nanumba schoolboy killed his Konkomba mate near Nakpayili, after which the father of the victim killed the Nanumba boy,<sup>38</sup> triggering a joint KOYA/NAYA meeting to suppress tensions and to urge the public to treat this as a case of individuals.<sup>39</sup> After a casino fight in Bimbilla market in which three Konkomba men from Chamba got seriously injured in August, the Regional Minister said the same in Chamba,<sup>40</sup> but not much later, Konkomba arms smuggling was detected near Wulensi, feeding Nanumba suspicions that Konkomba were preparing to fight them.<sup>41</sup> These tensions, it must be noted, eclipsed a serious Nanumba internal chieftaincy dispute, which had led to intra-Nanumba violence on several occasions between 1990 and 1993, resulting in a 1993 summer ‘full of tensions’, according to the local administration (see chapter six).

A momentous event brought Konkomba/Nanumba tensions to a boiling point. On 25 January 1994, after police had arrested a Nanumba ammunitions smuggler, a Nanumba mob ransacked and burnt the Bimbilla police station, because according to them, police had turned a blind eye to massive Konkomba smuggling from the Konkomba Market in Accra.<sup>42</sup> Many Konkomba were angry that none of the Nanumba rioters were arrested and they suspected the involvement of the Nanumba MP Mohammed Ibn Chambas.<sup>43</sup>

After a week of tensions, a market riot was the last straw. On 1 February, a day after a Konkomba and Nanumba man had had a quarrel over the purchase of a rare and ritually important black guinea fowl at Nakpayili market (hence the conflict’s nickname ‘Guinea Fowl War’), the son of the Konkomba man killed the Nanumba and three of his relatives on their farm, after which local Nanumba attacked the Konkomba community, followed by a Konkomba counterattack (Skalník 2002: 148).

News of the violence spread over Nanun and the next day violence broke out in all corners of Nanun, this time also including the north. Fighting first spread to the area between Bimbilla and Chamba on 2 February. In Chamba, the chief’s son from Bimbilla came on a motorbike to inform his father about the Nakpayili

<sup>38</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.4/120 The Ag. District Chief Executive to The Northern Regional Minister (28-01-1993) ‘Situation Report on the Murder of Two Boys at Sogon (near Nakpayili) 5 Miles from Bimbilla’.

<sup>39</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.4/n.n. ‘Minutes of the Joint DISEC, Nanumba Youth Association and Konkomba Youth Association Meeting with the People of Nakpayili and Sogon on Murder Cases, Held on the 11th February, 1993’.

<sup>40</sup> NDA/P/20/vol.4/n.n. Ag. District Chief Executive ‘Quarterly Report for the Third Quarter – from July to September 1993: Nanumba District Assembly’.

<sup>41</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. The Zonal Secretariat of CDR Wulensi to The Ag. District Chief Executive (19-10-1993) ‘Situation Report’; respectively NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. The Zonal Secretariat of CDR Lungni-Kpandai to The District Secretary (15-12-1993).

<sup>42</sup> DG (29-01-1994) ‘Situation in Bimbilla still tense’; DG (31-01-1994) ‘Bimbilla is calm’; GT (27-01-1994) ‘Mob Attacks Securitymen, burns Bimbilla police post’; GV (14 – 16-02-1994) ‘The Bimbilla clash: The untold story’; DG (11-02-1994) ‘Letter to Tamale’.

<sup>43</sup> DG (17-02-1994) ‘Chambas denies allegation’.

turmoil. All Nanumba gathered at the palace and they left Chamba at midnight to arrive at Dakpam early next morning. Only the chief's elder (*wulana*) stayed behind in Chamba and he was killed together with two disabled persons.

Similar to 1981, as Konkomba in Chamba saw wounded persons coming from the Nakpayili area the next morning, they organised and attacked Dakpam, a town swollen with Nanumba refugees. There was intense fighting until the late afternoon, when over twenty Nanumba had died, including the chief, and Nanumba ran out of bullets. With few remaining bullets, Nanumba decided to try to break through the Konkomba siege to reach Bimbilla. Their escape was successful but in the next village of Taali, Konkomba sniper fire killed dozens of Nanumba. The remaining refugees reached the villages of Kpalisorgu and Nabaayili, which had already been burnt by Nanumba from Bimbilla and which were littered with Konkomba corpses, until reaching Bimbilla.

After burning down Kpalisorgu, Naabayili and a handful of other Konkomba communities, Nanumba youth and warriors could do little more than defend Bimbilla, Pusuga, Jilo and Kuku, the only remaining Nanumba settlements. On 4 February, Konkomba warriors sacked Wulensi and on 5 February they tried to attack Bimbilla. That day they killed Kpatihi Naa Ponado, one of the leading Nanumba warriors who however failed to respect the Bimbilla Naa due to the internal Nanumba chieftaincy crisis. Thousands of Konkomba warriors kept Bimbilla surrounded and attacked it daily for almost a week, usually at the western side.

On 3 February, violence also spread to Yendi, Salaga and Tamale, which, contrary to Bimbilla, still had sizeable Konkomba communities.<sup>44</sup> In Tamale, there was a systematic search for Konkomba.<sup>45</sup> Over two thousand Konkomba fled to the military Kamina Barracks, but almost four hundred were killed in town or at roadblocks south of town.<sup>46</sup> There was intense fighting in Dagbon and Gonja for weeks, but not in the Mamprusi area, where Mamprusi and Konkomba opinion leaders agreed to stay out of the conflict. Outside the Northern Region, the same happened with Konkomba and Nanumba in northern Brong Ahafo

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<sup>44</sup> DG (05-02-1994) 'Tight Security Measures'; GBC (03-02-1994) 'Fighting in Nanumba District', (in: Akapule n.d., a)); GT (07-02-1994) 'Konkomba Youth Appeal for Peace'; GT (11-02-1994) '3 More Killed in Krachi Dist'; GV (09 – 12-02-1994) 'Kokomba, Nanumba clash ... 8 houses burnt ... bodies litter street'; This was despite a 28 January 1994 Uchabobor letter to the Ya Na stating that the Konkomba paramountcy would be beneficial to Ya Na's administration (Uchabobor to The Ya-Na (28-01-1994) 'Request for elevation in Status as Chief').

<sup>45</sup> Pugansoa, Ben to Michael Butcher (10-02-1994) 'Ethnic clashes between Konkombas and Dagomba/Nanumba in the Northern Region of Ghana'; The Mirror (19-02-1994) 'Guinea fowls and their neighbours'; DG (11-02-1994) 'Represent All Groups in N.R.'; Uhuru, no. 2 (1994) 'War up North!'.

<sup>46</sup> DG (11-02-1994) 'Carnage at Buipe Bridge'.

region.<sup>47</sup> I hope to study this dedication to non-violence in future research. In the northern districts of the Volta Region, Konkomba attacked the small Nanumba community in Damanko,<sup>48</sup> and there were isolated incidents in the Krachi area. These areas received many refugees and many of their inhabitants moved to the conflict zones to fight.

Violence resembled that of 1981, but at a much larger scale. In a district with well over 100,000 inhabitants, virtually no-one was left untouched by this violence. Village attacks could last for hours but not for days, and they resulted in immediate cleansing. There was no systematic terror or rape. Within three days, all Nanumba were concentrated in Bimbilla and nearby Jilo, Kukuo and Pusuga villages, and save for a military intervention, their lot would have been very grim. In fact, while Nanumba military leaders may be correct when they explained their concentration in Bimbilla to me as a strategic choice, they were basically caught out in Bimbilla town.

My interlocutors, mostly adorable people, had lived through, or participated in, acts of male toddlers being knocked to death on a stone, pregnant women killed and having their bellies cut open to molest the foetus, war leaders beheaded and having their heads triumphantly carried through the streets, chiefs dragged out of their palaces onto the streets and cut to pieces with a machete, young men buried alive in a well, and families being burnt alive as the huts in which they were hiding were set ablaze. These realities are way beyond my imagination and my analytical comprehension, but the accounts of some of my interlocutors suggest that their violent behaviour was to counter profound uncertainty, fear and mistrust by way of pre-emptive cleansing, to kill or be killed, as a technique for establishing safety (Appadurai 1998).

Some people used AK47s, which were smuggled from surrounding countries or which were the heritage of Rawlings' revolution in the early 1980s. Many Konkomba however still used bow and arrow, the poison (*liluul*) of which got a reputation throughout the country: Anecdotes circulated in Accra about Konkomba arrows which could knock on your door and kill you when you opened. Adam Mpanbe, a herbalist from Chamba, emerged as one of the most renowned Konkomba war leaders. Mpanbe got military training in the revolutionary committees during the Rawlings' dictatorship of the early 1980s and he fought in the 1992 conflict in East Gonja. He was the embodiment of the stories in national media of Konkomba 'juju priests'.<sup>49</sup> Mpanbe always prepared a concoction for

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<sup>47</sup> GT (17-02-1994) 'Ejura area saved from disaster'; GT (21-02-1994) 'Konkomba, Nanumba Chiefs Meet at Sene'.

<sup>48</sup> DG (12-02-1994) 'Four women subjected to atrocities at Damanko'.

<sup>49</sup> GV (02 – 06-02-1994) 'Rituals are performed as Kokombas, Dagombas Prepare for War'; GV (21 – 23-02-1994) 'Nanumba-Konkomba War. Juju overcomes power of guns'; GV (02 – 06-03-1994) 'Mystery behind one-einged guinea-fowl exposed'.

his warriors to drink in the morning and wore several smocks covered with talismans. Nanumba equally possessed all kinds of talismans (*sabli*, pl. *saba*), which they attached to their smocks. As in 1981, most casualties died from the gunfire of single barrel guns.

## Security and relief

It took more than a week for national government to act on the violence. On 10 February, cabinet declared a three-month state of emergency for all seven eastern districts in the Northern Region. This decision was taken after fierce debate in parliament, during which the Nanumba MP (Mohammed Ibn Chambas) called the Konkomba violence unconstitutional and his Saboba colleague (Moses Mabengba) was suspended after saying that ‘The Konkombas fight like the Israelis; if you kill one, you lose ten’.<sup>50</sup> The state of emergency came along with a multibillion cedi Military Task Force (Gongong IV) in Bimbilla, Yendi, Salaga and Tamale, enabling President Rawlings to visit Nanun in the weekend of February 12 and 13.<sup>51</sup> The declaration of the State of Emergency was presented as the ‘long arm of the law’: Faced by ‘anarchy’, including the looting and burning down of a police station in Bimbilla, ‘the government’ had to exercise ‘the powers invested into her by the constitution’ to ‘arrest the breakdown of law and order’.<sup>52</sup> However, although the military expedition Gongong was presented as a law-preserving mission in Nanun, many Konkomba and Nanumba reflected on Gongong activities as illegal violence against Ghanaian citizens.

The Military Task Force namely left a trail of destruction in the conflict zone. As a reprisal for the Konkomba ambushing and killing of three soldiers near Salaga,<sup>53</sup> soldiers went round south-western Nanun, eastern Gonja and northern Krachi to burn every roadside Konkomba settlement.<sup>54</sup> Chamba was severely affected because the army had announced that there would be a meeting in town. Many Konkomba had gathered in town, and dozens were killed by gunshot or fire. KOYA repeatedly objected to these military reprisals.<sup>55</sup> In March, soldiers

<sup>50</sup> DG (10-02-1994) ‘House addresses ethnic conflict’.

<sup>51</sup> Gongong is a codename; a gongong is an announcement bell; ‘Press Conference, Declaration of State of Emergency. Its Implications on Human Conduct During the Conflict Period (1994)’ (n.d.) (in: Akapule (n.d., b)).

<sup>52</sup> ‘Press Conference, Declaration of State of Emergency. Its Implications on Human Conduct During the Conflict Period (1994)’ (n.d.) (in: Akapule (n.d., b)); ‘Declaration of Principles by the Parties to the Peace Negotiations in the Northern Conflict’ (04-06-1994).

<sup>53</sup> DG (14-02-1994) ‘Carnage in the North’; GT (14-02-1994) ‘President Condemns the Genocide’.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Tamale Shooting Incident: Tuesday 1st March 1994’ (n.d.) (in: Akapule (n.d., b)); GV (21 – 23-02-1994) ‘Nanumba-Konkomba War. Juju overcomes power of guns’; GV (23 – 27-02-1994) ‘Soldiers burn down Konkomba villages – Yam Sellers’; AI (28-02 – 06-03-1994) ‘Sweeping the dirt under the carpet’.

<sup>55</sup> Sukpen, Isaac *et al* (KOYA) to The Commander, Emergency Task Force (21-03-1994) ‘Be fair and just to Konkombas – Emergency Task Force’; Fulanba, Abdulai (2nd National Vice President

killed eight Nanumba civilians in Bimbilla, who showed suspicious behaviour but who were in fact performing a burial.<sup>56</sup> Directly after that, soldiers gunned down six Nanumba warriors who had attacked a Konkomba community near Chamba.<sup>57</sup> In reaction, Konkomba from Chamba launched a (failed) attack on Pusuga, the Nanumba military stronghold and seat of the warrior chief.

Violence continued unabated until April in parts of Dagbon and Gonja.<sup>58</sup> The northern conflict also extended to Accra, when on 1 March, a grenade exploded at the busy Konkomba market in downtown Accra, which had swollen with Konkomba refugees.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile there were continuous interceptions of ammunition in that market and at Accra and Bimbilla roadblocks.<sup>60</sup>

Media extensively covered the conflict, in a variety of tones. While the Government newspapers *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* and the Ghana Broadcasting Cooperation (GBC) presented the news in a (presumed) factual manner, opposition newspapers ignored an appeal from the Deputy Minister of Information to the journalists to abstain from critical reports.<sup>61</sup> Some journalists sympathised with the emancipating Konkomba,<sup>62</sup> while other articles blamed Konkomba for the violence. In a fascinating 1994 magazine article, Justice Katanga quoted some men from the streets of southern Ghana on the northern violence, before debunking such stereotypes.<sup>63</sup> An off-duty policeman told his friend that: 'The North! Eh, let me tell you, that is not Ghana-oo! Dey be bush

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KOYA) to Col. Osei Wusu, Minister of Interior (25-05-1994) 'Military and police brutalities of Konkombas in the Krachi District of the Volta Region'; Ngula, Dan *et al* (KOYA) to The Commissioner for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (n.d.) 'Atrocities against the Konkombas and their allies by the Military and Peace Keeping Mission in the Northern Region and in the Kete-Krachi and Nkwanta Districts in the Volta Region'; Uchabobor (05-11-1994) 'The Activities of Military in Konkomba Areas outside Saboba District'.

<sup>56</sup> GV (11 – 13-04-1994) '8 Nanumbas, 6 Others Killed'.

<sup>57</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. District Secretary to The Regional Minister (30-06-1994) 'Comprehensive Report on the Nanumba/Konkomba War in the District from 1st February to 30th June, 1994'.

<sup>58</sup> On 1 March in Tamale, where 12 Dagomba in a mob were killed by the army in front of a bank, inside of which some Konkomba were collecting their salaries (DG (03-03-1994) '9 Killed at Tamale'; GBC (01-03-1994) 'Tamale: Conflict erupts again', (in: Akapule (n.d., a)); GBC (04-03-1994) 'Govt. Delegation Press Release', (in: Akapule (n.d., a)); DG (19-03-1994) 'Research Committee on Conflicts of the National House of Chiefs'; DG (02-05-1994) 'Fighting stops in East Gonja'.

<sup>59</sup> DG (02-03-1994) '3 Injured in Grenade Blast'.

<sup>60</sup> DG (05-03-1994) 'Police seize arms at Konkomba market in Accra'; GT (05-03-1994) 'Police uncover arms cache at Yam Market'; GT (09-03-1994) 'Yam executive claim knowledge of arms'; GT (12-02-1994) 'Police impound large consignment of arms'; GT (12-02-1994) 'Others seized at Ashaiman barrier, 3 Answer in Court'; GT (18-02-1994) 'Police seize 1,097 Cartridges, other ammunition at Bimbilla'.

<sup>61</sup> GBC (16-03-1994) 'Deputy Information Minister' (in: Akapule (n.d., a)).

<sup>62</sup> AI (28-02 – 06-03-1994) 'Sweeping the dirt under the carpet'; AI (28-02 – 06-03-1994) 'Views on the Conflict in the North'; Uhuru, no. 9 (1994) Justice Katanga 'A new look at the Konkombas'.

<sup>63</sup> Uhuru: 9 (1994) Katanga, Justice, 'A New Look at the Konkombas – Stereotypes...and the road to reconciliation in Northern Ghana'.

people! Especially the Konkomba. Dey be foolish proper!’ Katanga overheard a lorry driver saying: ‘Ei! Dey be bad oo! Dos Konkombas! Dey ha bad juju!’ Juju, it may be noted, is a common national denomination for magic. And his ‘mate’ added that ‘they have horns and tails like devils’. Konkomba were perceived in the south as more backward than the other northerners, but, as the statement of the off-duty policeman showed, the other northerners were hardly better. Consider this quote from a government officer whom Katanga heard saying: ‘These people, the Cucumbers and Nanumba and what and what...They are always making trouble! They ought to just finish them all, one time!’<sup>64</sup>

These stigmas had a huge impact on media coverage, peace mediation and on the self-identification of Konkomba and Nanumba in the north and particularly in the south. All northerners tried to gain the support of media and academia, but the general Ghanaian public was hardly interested in distinguishing one northern group from the other (Skalnik 2003: 72; cf. Drucker-Brown 1995: 37; Pul 2003: 72-77).<sup>65</sup>

Most journalists were critical of the Rawlings administration.<sup>66</sup> *The Statesman* published a front page article titled ‘Shouldn’t these men resign?’, showing the pictures of Rawlings, the Regional Minister and high military staff.<sup>67</sup> Although some journalists tried to deny the seriousness of the conflict by pointing at the guinea fowl incident or by distancing it from Accra as ‘the Northern conflict’, the BBC interpreted the violence in the context of democratisation and saw it to have a huge impact on Ghana as a whole.<sup>68</sup> As in 1981, very few media reports reached Nanun, but the resulting national public debate greatly influenced the subsequent peace processes.

The estimated number of casualties in the entire conflict zone ranged from 1,000 to 15,000, but the 2006 GHANEP estimate of 2,400 appears realistic.<sup>69</sup> In

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<sup>64</sup> Uhuru: 9 (1994) Katanga, Justice, ‘A New Look at the Konkombas – Stereotypes ... and the road to reconciliation in Northern Ghana’.

<sup>65</sup> Uhuru (1994, no. 9) Katanga, Justice, ‘A New Look at the Konkombas – Stereotypes ... and the road to reconciliation in Northern Ghana’. Scholarship in Ghana was also divided; some found the majority groups such as Nanumba feudal (Brukum 2001; Katanga 1994), while other found Konkomba benevolent (Boaten 1999; Mahama 2003; Martinson 1995).

<sup>66</sup> GV (23 – 27-02-1994) ‘Kokomba War Plan Found’; WA (04-10-04-1994) Alfred Owusu Frimpong ‘The Konkomba Factor’.

<sup>67</sup> GV (14 – 16-02-1994) ‘Rawlings Provoked Nanumba, Kokomba War – NDC Chairman’; See also GV (16 – 20-02-1994) ‘Rawlings Told Northern in 1991...Take up guns if you are cheated ... and today there is war’; respectively *The Statesman* (06-03-1994) ‘Shouldn’t These Men Resign?’; A similar message came from West Africa (WA (28-02 – 06-03-1994) ‘Fatal miscalculation’.

<sup>68</sup> BBC Focus on Africa, 13 (1994) Baxter, Joan ‘Coming of age’; cf. Africa Report (May/June 1994) Ruby Ofori ‘Rawlings’ biggest challenge’; An Ashanti independent editorial similarly put it that ‘We are pretenders, we have more problems than we think we have’ (AI (06-03 – 13-03-1994) ‘Our Point of View’).

<sup>69</sup> ‘Recommended Joint Proposal of the GoG/Inter NGO Consortium for Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance in Northern Ghana’ (undated).

total, 152,600 refugees were registered but the actual number of displaced people was probably much higher (Van der Linde & Naylor 1999: 28, 32), also because many Konkomba fled to Togo.<sup>70</sup> According to NAYA, 863 Nanumba were buried, including seven chiefs.<sup>71</sup> Figures for Konkomba casualties are lacking altogether, because, if possible, Konkomba carried their dead home and instantly buried them. At least 442 villages were destroyed by fire, of which 56 in Nanun.

By March 1994, there were 57,000 so-called internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nanun,<sup>72</sup> quadrupling the population of Bimbilla town and overcrowding Kukuo and Wulensi too. Because there were no camps, refugees usually stayed with relatives in overcrowded rooms. Chamba had at least 8,000 Konkomba refugees, especially after the Commander of the Task Force in March ordered all wandering Konkomba in Nanun to concentrate at Chamba or Makayili to await disarmament. Those failing to do so ran the risk of being shot.<sup>73</sup> In all mentioned places, there were severe problems with sanitation, malnutrition and epidemics of guinea worm disease, dysentery, meningitis, yellow fever and cholera.<sup>74</sup> Many Bimbilla refugees felt cheated, insulted and accused of witchcraft, causing thousands of them to leave Nanun altogether and start anew in Tamale and especially Accra. Sadly, the safety of Bimbilla was destroyed by intra-ethnic, mostly intra-family, tensions and accusations, often triggered by poverty and jealousy over relief aid (Kirby 2006: 18).

Two weeks after the start of the military intervention, the Government of Ghana, domestic and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the United Nations made an assessment tour in the conflict zone.<sup>75</sup> The assessment kicked off a mishmash of relief efforts, often distributed by NGOs

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<sup>70</sup> DG (19-02-1994) '5000 Refugees Flee to Togo'.

<sup>71</sup> 'Joint Memorandum of the Nanumba Traditional Council and the Nanumba Youth Association to the Negotiation Team on the Ethnic Conflict in the Northern Region' (June 1994).

<sup>72</sup> Department of Social Welfare – Northern Region (undated) 'Report on the State of Displaced Persons'; in June there were 62,000 (NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. District Secretary to The Regional Minister (30-06-1994) 'Comprehensive Report on the Nanumba/Konkomba War in the District from 1st February to 30th June, 1994'; WA (21-27-03-1994) 'Soldiers buried'.

<sup>73</sup> Konkomba in East Gonja should concentrate at Loloto, those in Kipakpaan in Saboba and Wapuli ('Press Statement by the Task Force Mission Commander (1994) (n.d.) (in: Akapule (n.d., b)).

<sup>74</sup> Dekker, Rein (Inter NGO Consortium) (29-03-1995) 'Assessment of the Situation in Bimbilla District'; Inter-NGO Consortium (ActionAid Ghana) (25-02-1996) 'Report on Seed Procurement and Dispatch to Conflict Area for Distribution to IDPs'; Dr. C. Owusu-Agyeman (Reg. Health Admin.) to The Minister of Health (17-04-1994) 'Report on Health Service Delivery in Northern Region from February 2nd-April 15th'; Jangira, Lindiwe Chaza (Emergency Consultant Unicef) to Ken Williams (Unicef Representative) (26-07-1994) 'Comments/Recommendations on the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Programme for Internally Displaced in the Northern Conflict'; GBC (23-03-1994) 'Military Task Force Briefs the Press' (in: Akapule (n.d., a).

<sup>75</sup> 'Recommended Joint Proposal of the GoG/Inter NGO Consortium for Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance in Northern Ghana' (undated).

who stood for bilateral and multilateral donors.<sup>76</sup> Médecins Sans Frontières, Red Cross, Assemblies of God Relief and Development Services (AGREDS), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Oxfam were the main distributors, while World Vision coordinated the relief aid from Tamale. To streamline the relief programme, most involved NGOs joined the umbrella of the so-called Inter-NGO Consortium.<sup>77</sup>

The challenges for providing humanitarian relief in a conflict zone the size of the Netherlands were immense. It took the relief agencies more than two weeks to provide potable water in Bimbilla and even longer to bring in food and non-food items (blankets, clothes and candles). There was shortage of vehicles due to miscommunication and competition between NGOs (Van der Linde, p.c.). Registration of refugees was another constraint for providing relief, due to the mentioned infrastructural constraints but also because of unclear definitions: In Bimbilla, there was no refugee camp, making it difficult to tell who was displaced. Arguably the biggest challenge for registration was to take away the widespread fear to give out one's identity.<sup>78</sup> Although the Consortium of NGOs worked in so-called 'joint neutral teams', it was sometimes difficult to win the confidence of people in need, either due to their perceived affinity with project communities or because of their Christian foundation (Pul 2003: 77). While Konkomba in majority inclined to Christianity, Nanumba and related groups were predominantly Muslims. However, this religious division was – and still is – hardly any issue in Nanun.

## Petitioning and new violence

Although the Government of Ghana contributed to relief aid, its main task was to provide security. On 12 April 1994, the Minister for Interior formed the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT), chaired by the paramount chief of the Efutuakwa Traditional Area (in Ashanti Region) and member of the Council of

<sup>76</sup> Relief programmes included a ten month food assistance package from the World Food Programme (WFP), a Ministry of Food and Agriculture package for agricultural reconstruction, low-rent loans from the Agricultural Development Bank and the deployment of doctors funded by Ministry of Health; DG (16-02-1994) 'Govt Registers Refugees from Ethnic Conflict'; GT (16-02-1994) '35 Doctors, Others to Go to the War Zone'.

<sup>77</sup> 'Draft Northern NGO Consortium Working Principles and Guidelines' (n.d.); UNICEF, WFP, UK Overseas Development Administration (ODA), the British and Canadian High Commissions and later also United National Development Programme (UNDP) and USAID were the main bilateral and multilateral donors. Prominent local NGOs were Amaschina, AGREDS, Ti Yum Taaba Development Association (TIDA), Business Advisory Development and Consultancy Centre (BADECC), Catholic Secretariat, Council of Churches, Gubkatimali and Penorudas. Internal NGOs included Action Aid, Action on Disability and Development (ADD), CRS, Lifeline Denmark, Oxfam UK and Ireland and World Vision (Van der Linde & Naylor 1999: 30). In Nanun, most relief aid was distributed by Amaschina, AGREDS and TIDA.

<sup>78</sup> Kuyipwa, Andrew (Inter NGO Co-ordinator) (undated) 'Report on the Monitoring Exercise in Nanumba District'.

State. The other members were paramount chiefs, MPs and representatives from the President's Office. PPNT's objective was a ceasefire followed by peace negotiations against the backdrop of the 1992 Constitution.

The ceasefire, signed in two separate meetings on 9 June, has seven agreements between the by representatives from seven ethnic groups. The agreements banned the use of physical and verbal violence and imposed a commitment to abide by the law. After the signing of the ceasefire, the various delegations took the message of ceasefire home. KOYA toured the main Konkomba communities, including Chamba and preached the ceasefire as a peace accord.<sup>79</sup> In the meantime, the state of emergency which had been extended thrice was finally lifted on 10 August 1994.

After the ceasefire, PPNT asked all parties to write 'position papers'. Only the Konkomba and Nanumba papers are studied here. The petitions were addressed to PPNT but copies were sent to respectively the Konkomba and Nanumba delegations. The invitation to write position papers exacerbated the legalistic petitioning which, as I argued in chapter one, produced societal silence because laymen stood behind the authoritative statements of especially Youth Associations.

The first Nanumba petition, signed by Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II, was written late June.<sup>80</sup> It gives a chronology from 1938 [sic, 1940], when according to the paper the first Konkomba settled in Nanun after killing the Segberi Naa in Dagbon. Despite warnings from the Ya Naa about the bellicose Konkomba, then Bimbilla Naa Abudulai received the Konkomba, provided they respected the Nanumba customs and rituals. This they did until 1981, when Konkomba started to install their own chiefs, 'perform sacrifices to Nanumba gods and violate sacred grounds, ponds and hunting territories'. Bimbilla Naa blamed KOYA for all this, stating that since its foundation KOYA has planned 'to eject the Nanumba from their legitimate land', which they successfully did in Damanko and Kpasa. He said that the Konkomba 'bellicosity is totally unwarranted and out of tune with proper conduct in lawful, constitutional and civilized society'. And moreover, the 'truth is that the Nanumbas have been taken for a ride due to their excessive hospitality'. Naa Abarika's 'final and not negotiable' solution is that all Konkomba leave Nanun, as 'they have forfeited and exhausted any privileges they may have been accorded by the Nanumbas'. Konkomba must be regrouped

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<sup>79</sup> 'Declaration of Principles by the Parties to the Peace Negotiations in the Northern Conflict' (04-06-1994); 'A Comprehensive Report Presented to the Negotiating Team on the Ethnic Conflict in the Northern Region on the Declaration of Principles Peace Negotiation by First Vice President of Konkomba Youth Association (Mr. Isaac B. Sukpen) on KOYA's Involvement in the Peace Accord Exercise from 15th-24th June, 1994' (n.d.).

<sup>80</sup> 'Joint Memorandum of the Nanumba Traditional Council and the Nanumba Youth Association to the Negotiation Team on the Ethnic Conflict in the Northern Region' (June 1994).

in the Saboba area and ‘be subjected to intense education so that they can abandon their violent propensities’. Attached to the petition was a set of regulations derived from the Alhassan Committee report, which were referred to as ‘terms of settlement’.

The first Konkomba position paper was written on 5 July by Kenneth Wujangi (KOYA President).<sup>81</sup> This lengthy document (14 pages) dealt not only with Konkomba/Nanumba relations. According to the petition, the conflict started because Konkomba have been subject to ridicule and exploitation and it could have been prevented if national and regional politicians had been fair to them. After narrating the conflict histories in the various districts, the last part of the paper focuses on the root causes of the conflict, notably the colonially invented opposition between the ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ tribes in northern Ghana, and the majority’s monopolisation of ‘political, economical and traditional’ resources in the Northern Region. The main solutions offered are that all ethnic groups in the Northern Region should have separate chieftaincies and political representation should be open to qualified people irrespective of their ethnic background.

In September, KOYA under Wujangi prepared a position paper specifically addressing the Konkomba/Nanumba situation.<sup>82</sup> The petitioners put the Konkomba/Nanumba conflicts in a chronology of conflicts in the Northern Region between 1979 and 1994, so as to demonstrate an ‘unholy alliance’ of the ruling class of Dagbamba, Gonja and Nanumba against the ‘so-called chiefless and minority groups’. The paper then claims that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Nanumba founded their chiefdom ‘in the heart of Konkomba land’. This statement was motivated by the widespread Konkomba idea that originally, they were not only indigenous to Dagbon but to the entire Oti Basin also including Nanun and eastern Gonja.

It is likely that the KOYA petitioners were influenced by Ali Kamshegu (the 1981 headman), who in the hearings of the Lamptey Commission which investigated into the 1981 conflict, had built a Konkomba first-comer narrative in Nanun around the toponymy of Waapu, a small lake west of Bimbilla which was dammed in colonial times. Kamshegu stated that when Nmantambu conquered Nanun he met a female Konkomba potter called Waapu.<sup>83</sup> This name, several KOYA members spelt out to me, was derived from Likpakpaln *liwaal aapuu* (the shrine’s wife) who by digging the clay for pottery created the lake. Nanumba

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<sup>81</sup> KOYA (July 1994) ‘Konkomba Position Paper, July 1994 to the Permanent Negotiation Team into Conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana’.

<sup>82</sup> Wujangi, Kenneth *et al.* (KOYA) to The Permanent Negotiation Team (September 1994) ‘Konkomba Position Paper on Conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana – With Reference to Nanumba-Konkomba Conflicts’.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Statement of J.Y. Ali Kamshegu on Settlement of Dagombas on Konkomba Lands and Some of the Taboos of Nanumba District to the Lamptey Committee into Konkomba/Nanumba Conflict’ (1981).

have always firmly rejected this history by claiming that Waapu means a collection of water, from the old Nanunli word *waa* (water; currently: *Kom*) and *puya* (collected).<sup>84</sup>

The petitioners' first-comer claim to Nanun implied that 'being the aborigines, cannot the Konkombas demand any rights and privileges from the colonially prompted Nanumba regime imposed on them with the aid of the British.' Not only were Konkomba the 'aborigines' of Nanun, they also were its demographic and economic backbone as 'the leading producer of all food crops in the district'.

Wujangi called for the implementation of the 1985 negotiations, the failure for which he blamed on NAYA, to ensure 'a speedy integration of the Konkomba interest built around the Bimbilla-Na':

'The Konkombas have always recognised the Bimbilla-Na as Paramount Chief from time immemorial, but no Nanumba Chief has made any definite attempt to integrate the Konkombas politically and traditionally into the Nanumba society. [...] We are aware it is not easy to integrate two peoples with different cultures into one society, but the time has now come for both the Nanumba and the Konkomba to make a bold attempt towards a peaceful co-existence providing a strong unity in diversity.'

This KOYA position clearly showed the differences between the Konkomba case in Nanun and in Dagbon. Nanumba representatives were however red hot after reading this KOYA petition. My copy of the document contains comments written in the margins by a NAYA executive. His jottings vary from 'Show evidence' (Konkomba aboriginality) to 'Big lie' (Nanumba are blamed for the failed 1985 negotiations). Yet another jotting states 'If aborigines, why accept Bimbilla-Na overlordship?' In the petitioners' claim for political and administrative representation for Konkomba who prove to be dedicated sons of the district, the word 'dedicated' is underlined.

The KOYA petition was countered in September by another NTC/NAYA memo.<sup>85</sup> In this petition, NAYA rejected KOYA as negotiation partners, because since '[n]one of them is in Nanung and we have reason to believe that they do not represent the Konkombas in Nanung.' The petition rejected the KOYA claim of aboriginality in Nanun, which was considered an agenda to seize the lands of Nanun. According to the petitioners, different populations in Nanun had 'welded

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<sup>84</sup> Muslim Gonja chronicles from the late 19th or early 20th century suggest that when Jakpa – the founder of Gonja – crossed the Daka River to conquer 'the country of Nanunba and Kunkunba' (Quoted in Wilks *et al.* 1986: 163). Zech (1904: 116) had it that Konkomba used to live in places of Eastern Gonja, perhaps up to Yeji. According to Pogucki (1955: 23), Konkomba once inhabited Salaga. Tait in an eloquent but highly speculative article (1955b) used toponymies to defend the hypothesis that Konkomba once lived as far west as Tamale. More research may be required on this theme.

<sup>85</sup> Na Gbantohgu *et al* On behalf of Bimbilla-Na and Nanumba Youth Association (23-09-1994) 'Response to the 'Konkomba Position Paper of Conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana with Reference to Nanumba-Konkomba Conflicts Presented to the Permanent Negotiating Team, September 1994'.

together at various stages into the Nanumba'; including the original population ('the Foundation stock of Tendana'), 'the stock of Mantambu (Founder of Nanumba state)' and, among others, groups of Gonja, Hausa and Asante:

'Those who were in Nanung before Mantambu – a Guan speaking people from several villages in present day Nanung have a strategic role in the rituals, funerals and selection of chiefs in Nanung including the Bimbilla-Na. [...] No Konkomba has ever had the privilege and duty of performing any customary role in Nanung.'

This is because:

'As is widely known and confirmed by independent research (Prof. David Tait 1958, 1961, Skalnik 1958, 1986, 1987, 1989) the Konkomba farmers started to settle in Nanung as refugees only from the 1940's onwards after they had killed the Zagbli-Lana [Dagomba Chief] and they were received well by the Nanumbas.'

The petitioners interpreted this Konkomba settlement as a deliberate and illegal attempt to seize the lands of Nanun. On the allegation that Nanumba failed to integrate Konkomba into their chieftaincy, the petitioners argued that Kanjoo Naa was installed as the Konkomba leader for Nanun and that political participation and distribution of development projects in Nanun is non-discriminatory. In its conclusion, the petition repeated the earlier statement that Konkomba should leave Nanun.

On 9 January 1995, the Bimbilla Naa wrote yet another petition, softening his demand that not all Konkomba but only '360 warlords' should leave Nanun, but he maintained his refusal to allow Konkomba political representation in Nanun.<sup>86</sup> This petition made KOYA so angry that they refused to attend to a PPNT mediated meeting with NAYA on 28 January (Skalnik 2002: 164). In their absence, PPNT endorsed a set of conditions from the Bimbilla Naa to KOYA, including a safety assurance and a public apology to the Bimbilla Naa.<sup>87</sup> These conditions were unacceptable to KOYA, and two PPNT meetings with NAYA and KOYA in late February could not ease the build-up of tensions in Nanun.<sup>88</sup>

Despite ceasefire, there were dozens of fatal ambushes of farmers and traders in Nanun, after the rainy season and particularly in February and March 1995, a period typified by a local administrator as full of 'panic, fear and chaos'.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II to The Permanent Negotiation Team of the Northern Region (09-01-1995) 'Final Proposal for Finding a Lasting and Permanent Solution to the Nanumba-Konkomba Wars in the Nanumba Traditional Area of Northern Region'.

<sup>87</sup> Wujangi, Kenneth *et al.* (KOYA) (n.d.) 'Reactions of Konkombas Resident in Nanumba District to Conditions Laid down by the Paramount Chief of the Nanumbas'.

<sup>88</sup> DG (16-03-1995) 'Govt Imposes Curfew in Nanumba District'; GT (16-03-1995) '... Negotiation Team Shocked'.

<sup>89</sup> NDA/P/20/vol.4/n.n. 'First Quarterly Report of the Nanumba District Office of the National Commission for Civic Education 1995'; respectively NDA/P/20/vol.4/19 District Co-Ordinating Director (28-08-1995) 'Quarterly Report for the 1st Quarter from 1st January – 31st March, 1995, of the Nanumba District Assembly'; NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. District Secretary to The Regional Minister (17-06-1994) 'Report on the Security Situation in the Nanumba District'; respectively NDA/-

Travelling was possible because of a status quo: Nanumba could travel through Chamba so long as Konkomba could travel through Bimbilla. The majority of Konkomba however took bush-paths to Damanko and entered lorries there. On 12 March the son of the Konkomba headman from Nabaayili cycled to Damanko market to buy bicycle parts, but he got ambushed and killed on a bush-path near Nakpayili.<sup>90</sup> This sparked off open ethnic violence in Nanun.

That very afternoon, Konkomba from surrounding villages attacked the few Nanumba in Nakpayili. Nanumba residents tried to flee to the nearby village of Binda. When news reached Bimbilla, Nanumba youth and warriors attacked Nabaayili west of town. The next day, intense fighting took place in and around Pusuga, the Nanumba warrior stronghold which Nanumba warriors had dubbed 'Dobeyili' (the village of men) and which for most Konkomba symbolised Nanumba arrogance. In the morning, Konkomba attacked and burnt Demonayili, a village close to Pusuga and around 4 pm, they burnt down Pusuga and two hamlets west of town, while Nanumba attacked an adjacent Konkomba community. The same day, Konkomba also launched failed attacks on Bimbilla, Wulensi and Kukuo but the next day, Konkomba burnt down all three remaining Nanumba settlements south of Bimbilla, after which cleansing was completed and violence stopped. The violence left over hundred people dead, most of whom in Pusuga, and Nanun was put under curfew again for months.<sup>91</sup> The military commander in Bimbilla held Konkomba responsible for the violence, and local police

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DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. District Co-Ordinating Director to The Ag. Regional Minister (01-09-1994) 'Situation Report on Nanumba Konkomba Conflict as at Thursday, 1st September, 1994'; NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. Ag. District Chief Executive to The Regional Minister (07-03-1995) 'Situation Report from the Nanumba District on Nanumba/Konkomba Conflict from Tuesday 28/2/95 to Sunday 5/3/95'; NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. Ag. District Chief Executive to Ag. Regional Minister (10-03-1995) 'Shooting of Three People near the Bimbilla Dam on 9/3/95'; NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. Ag. District Chief Executive to The Regional Minister (27-02-1995) 'Situational Report on Nanumba/Konkomba Conflict'; NDA/E/11/vol.2/102 Asst. Secretary Nanumba Youth Association to The Chairman, DISEC (11-10-1994) 'Acts of Vandalism Carried Out by the Konkombas within the Nanumba District and the Activities of the Non. Ag. District Chief Executive for Saboba Mr. P.Y. Dibabe'; Kamshegu, Ali *et al* (undated) 'Situation Report on General Security and Public Education in Relation to Resumption of Hostility Between Konkombas and Nanumbas in the Nanumba District'.

<sup>90</sup> Dekker, Rein (Inter NGO Consortium) (29-03-1995) 'Assessment of the Situation in Bimbilla District'.

<sup>91</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. Ag. District Chief Executive to The Regional Minister (March 1995) 'Brief Report on the Nanumba/Konkomba War from 21st March to Monday 27th March 1995'; DG (25-03-1995) 'Konkomba-Nanumba Conflict Claims 109 Lives'; GT (25-03-1995) '109 So Far Killed in Fresh Ethnic Fighting in N. Region'; GT (16-03-1995) 'Curfew Imposed in Nanumba District to Check Further Fighting'.

in Bimbilla admitted having used violence against Konkomba.<sup>92</sup> Despite incidental ambushing, calm was restored in Nanun over April.<sup>93</sup>

PPNT also said it was ‘shocked’ by the violence,<sup>94</sup> but the Team’s incapacity had become already obvious to the warring parties, the general public in Ghana, the Inter-NGO Consortium and probably also to itself. As a Government commission, PPNT was associated with state inertia (Kaye 2007), from the late declaration of a State of Emergency to military atrocities against citizens. By unconditionally accepting the youth associations as negotiation partners, PPNT got trapped in their conditions. Despite KOYA objections, it agreed to treat the Dagomba, Gonja and Nanumba youth associations as one block, resulting in a reactionary Konkomba, Bassari, Nawuri and Nchumuru coalition.<sup>95</sup> The coalitions never interacted with each other, but instead PPNT asked the youth leaders to write petitions, which were used primarily for repeating pre-war rhetoric. Many Konkomba, Nanumba and Ghanaians at large doubted not only the vigour but also the impartiality of the Government and President Rawlings, even though the latter had declared during the sober 6 March Independence celebrations in 1994 in Accra that ‘government has never, and will not discriminate against any region or ethnic group’, a statement which he repeated in a 2007 interview with me.<sup>96</sup>

## The Kumasi peace process

Although the Consortium’s activism was primarily a ‘consultation on development’ (Assefa 2001: 170), it was prepared to play a facilitating and mediating, but not an arbitrating, role in any peace initiative. Directly after the March 1995 violence, the Consortium toured the conflict areas and formed the Peace Awareness Committee made up of representatives from the warring parties and charged

<sup>92</sup> DG (25-03-1995) ‘Konkomba-Nanumba Conflict Claims 109 Lives’; respectively DG (22-03-1995) ‘New Moves to Contain Northern Conflict’.

<sup>93</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. Ag. District Chief Executive to The Regional Minister (15-04-1995) ‘Brief Report on the Nanumba/Konkomba War from Tuesday 28th March – Monday 3rd April, 1995’; NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. Ag. District Chief Executive to The Regional Minister (27-03-1995) ‘Situation Report on Nanumba/Konkomba War’. When Konkomba breached ceasefire in Dagbon late April, soldiers burnt down five local Konkomba villages. KOYA was shocked by the military reprisals, which were brought to the public in a government-owned newspaper article headlined ‘Konkomba taste their own medicine’ (‘Press Statement by National President of Konkomba Youth Association (Isaac B. Sukpen) after Konkombas Burning Kpatinga and a Military Burning of 5 Konkombas Villages’ (n.d.); GT (29-04-1995) ‘Konkombas Taste Their Own Medicine’.

<sup>94</sup> GT (16-03-1995) ‘... Negotiation Team Shocked’.

<sup>95</sup> Konkomba, Basare, Nawuri and Nchumuru Youth Association to The Chairman, Permanent Negotiation Team on Northern Region Conflicts (02-08-1994) ‘Breaches of peace accord by Dagombas and their allies’.

<sup>96</sup> WA (21-27-03-1994) ‘Rawlings stresses unity’; GT (14-03-1994) ‘Resolving N.R. Conflict, Task for All, President’; KOYA also denied that Rawlings had made paramountcy promises (Sukpen, Isaac *et al* (23-02-1994) ‘Konkomba Youth Association – Press Release’.

them with the organisation of a peace workshop in Kumasi.<sup>97</sup> The workshop of 16-18 May 1995 was the first of six ‘Kumasi workshops’, which culminated in the signing of the *Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation Between The Various Ethnic Groups In Northern Region of Ghana* ten months later.<sup>98</sup> Although the Government of Ghana gave the Consortium the liberty to act, it never officially recognised the accord.

Assefa rejected the PPNT approach: He bypassed the youth leaders as representatives of ethnic blocks, insisted that Dagomba, Gonja and Nanumba were treated as separate delegations and replaced the petitioning habit with open dialogue. Leadership was one threat to the unity which Assefa wanted to build in his workshops; religion was another. First, Assefa blamed leaders for inculcating cultures of fear (2001: 179). He therefore looked for consensus among ‘voices of reason’ or ‘bridge-builders’, whom he selected as his workshop participants (2001: 168-169).<sup>99</sup> He wanted to ‘start with a manageable number of actors and issues and then gradually expand outward to reach the whole community in order to address the multiplicity of issues in the conflict in a multidimensional and holistic manner’ (2001: 179).

Second, Assefa adhered to a kind of perennialism: While he found religion an instrument of division, spirituality exposed the essence of all religions and has the capacity to produce ‘healthy societies’ (2001: 185), through the voluntary and unconditional remorse and seeking forgiveness in the face of God, oneself, one’s neighbours and nature (1996: 46). Hoping to stop the accusations and counteraccusations of the ethnic delegations, he explained peace as the responsibility of each and every *individual* participant. In so doing, Assefa hoped to draw attention away from the ethnicity which divided the participants, to the belief in God which united them.<sup>100</sup> This tactic had all chances to fail, because the ethnic divisions of the participants overlapped with religious differences: Dagomba, Gonja and Nanumba incline to Islam and Konkomba to Christianity. Moreover, if there was one factor which compromised the neutrality of the NPI and most NGOs in the Consortium, it was their Christian background. However, Assefa sensed well that many northern Ghanaians take pride in stating that Christians and Muslims worship the same God (cf. Kirby 2002). A Muslim workshop participant told Assefa: ‘You may not know it, but you are deeply Muslim’ (Assefa 2001: 185).

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<sup>97</sup> ‘Nairobi Peace Initiative, Inter-NGO Consortium, Search for Peace in the Northern Region of Ghana. Update Report and Six Months Programme Proposal’ (n.d.).

<sup>98</sup> ‘Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation between the Various Ethnic Groups in the Northern Region of Ghana’.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Nairobi Peace Initiative, Inter-NGO Consortium, Search for Peace in the Northern Region of Ghana. Update Report and Six Months Programme Proposal’ (n.d.).

<sup>100</sup> ‘Nairobi Peace Initiative, Inter-NGO Consortium, Search for Peace in the Northern Region of Ghana. Update Report and Six Months Programme Proposal’ (n.d.).

Kumasi I was the first occasion since the outbreak of the war at which Konkomba and Nanumba representatives met. Although many participants knew each well personally, it took Assefa more than a day to let them have breakfast together. Assefa told the participants that the Consortium wanted to empower the participants to become peacemakers, but he also asked the participants what they expected from the Consortium. Assefa promised to listen to the request for peace education and the involvement of chiefs and leaders in the process but he refused to assist the PPNT. The participants recruited representatives for the second workshop (26-29 June), around forty of them, including chiefs, MPs and youth association representatives, who according to Assefa were 'more difficult to handle' (Assefa 2001: 172, 173).

Although their distribution of relief aid ended in December 1995, the Consortium became ever more engaged in the peace process. In August 1995, Alhaji Alhassan Chambas, a Nanumba political heavyweight, spoke of 'the miracles of Prof. Assefa'.<sup>101</sup> Obviously, Assefa was not just authorising (or empowering) workshop participants but he became an authority himself! Workshop participants organised several peace gatherings as daily life started to normalise. In July, the Regional Minister visited Bincheratanga town north of Bimbilla, in the presence of both KOYA and NAYA.<sup>102</sup> Both associations declared to peacefully handle the many resettlement disputes (Assefa 2001: 174-175; Van der Linde & Naylor 1999: 52). From 16-23 October, an extensive Peace Education Campaign started in Nanumba district, followed by similar campaigns in the other conflict districts.<sup>103</sup>

The third Kumasi workshop (16-19 December 1995) drew in national youth leaders and chiefs as participants, to discuss the causes of and solutions for the violence. Both Konkomba and Nanumba delegates saw the need for peace education and the establishment of a multi-ethnic Northern Youth Association, but they also wanted PPNT support for the Consortium. Nanumba delegates wanted security assurances from Konkomba, because they feared the Konkomba

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<sup>101</sup> Jesiwuni, Issahaku (BADECC) (August 1995) 'Report on the Inter NGO Consortium/NPI Peace Education Committee in Yendi on the 5th of August, 1995'.

<sup>102</sup> NDA/DISEC/C/02/vol.5/n.n. District Co-Ordinating Director to The Regional Minister (26-07-1995) 'Report on the Visit of the Regional Minister and Regional Security Council Members to Bincheratanga – Nanumba District on 18/7/95'; NDA/E/11/vol.2/n.n. Konkomba Delegation on Inter NGO Consortium and NPI Peace Moves to The Executive Director – BADECC (07-08-1995) 'Application for means of transport to reach out to Konkombas and Nanumbas in Nanumba District in concert with Nanumba Youth Association from 11th to 13th August, 1995'; NDA/E/11/vol.2/108 President Konkomba Youth Association to The Chairman, Permanent Negotiation Team (01-05-1995) 'Passionate appeal for effective means of transport to reach out to Konkombas in Yendi, Gusheigu/Karaga, Zabzugu/Tatale, Nanumba and East Gonja Districts to Enhance Public Education for Absolute Peace to Return to the Conflict Area in the Northern Region'.

<sup>103</sup> 'Nairobi Peace Initiative, Inter-NGO Consortium, Search for peace in the Northern Region of Ghana. Update Report and Six Months Programme Proposal' (n.d.).

installation of chiefs without Nanumba consent and their suspected intention to forcefully take over the lands of Nanun. Konkomba delegates pointed at the denial of self-rule and imposition of leadership on them by ‘majority groups’. Assefa made the Konkomba delegates to assure Nanumba that they were not after the land of Nanun and pressed the Nanumba team to consider granting Konkomba chieftaincy titles in Nanun (Van der Linde & Naylor 1999: 40).

In order to move from this rough deal to a draft peace accord, Assefa invited the PPNT representatives from each ethnic group to Kumasi IV (26-29 February 1996). The representatives of the parties were then sent home to present the draft accord to opinion leaders and report back to Kumasi in a month. At the fifth workshop (27-30 March 1996), the delegates returned to Kumasi with generally much communal support but also with a number of issues which required extensive renegotiation: Notably, Nanumba wanted to subject Konkomba to yam harvest tribute regulations. Through Assefa’s mediation, this issue was abandoned and on the last day of the workshop, Konkomba and Nanumba delegations, and delegations of the five other ethnic groups, signed the accord (Assefa 2001: 177).

## Reconciliation

By the time the accord was signed, Nanun was slowly getting back on its feet. The economy of Nanun was in shatters, but with free movement of its citizens guaranteed, yam cultivation recovered and markets reopened. NGOs (notably the Catholic Relief Services and Assemblies of God Relief and Development Services) had a significant role in reconstruction. However, directly after the peace accord, many NGOs turned their backs on Nanun and centred their activities in the regional capital Tamale where some of them unleashed a competition for Assefa’s heritage. When an Oxfam team assessed the situation in the former conflict zone in September 1996, they saw development projects in disrepair (Van der Linde & Naylor 1999: 63).

Government control came about only piecemeal, leaning much on security forces. A large military/police contingent of Operation Gongong IV has stayed in Nanun up to date, still protecting a ban on the use of firearms.<sup>104</sup> The Nanumba District Assembly (DA) gradually started to gain control over its citizens, again or at last. With the assistance of the military presence, the DA forced thousands of internally displaced Nanumba to return to their villages, but revenue collection

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<sup>104</sup> NDA/L/11/v.3/208 Registrar Nanumba Traditional Council to The Sector Commander (04-06-2001) ‘Permit to Use Fire Arms’; NDA/L/11/v.3/207 Registrar Nanumba Traditional Council to The Divisional Commander (04-06-2001) ‘Application for Police Assistance’.

did not recommence until late 1997. Dozens of destroyed schools and clinics had not yet opened as late as 1996.<sup>105</sup>

In September 1996, President Rawlings and the PPNT ‘reconciled’ Konkomba and Nanumba in a Bimbilla school park, the last but according to KOYA the most important of three ceremonies.<sup>106</sup> Compared to similar ceremonies in Yendi (December 1994) and Salaga (May 1996), there was little media attention to the Bimbilla reconciliation. In Nanun, I found a complete silence about the ceremony too, and my interlocutors said ‘it was just politics’ or ‘I was not there’. Several NGO executives who attended to the ceremony also reflected on it as ‘not from the heart’ or ‘a political rally’.

In this ceremony, the issue of divergent reconciliation rites was solved in a construction in which the Bimbilla earth priest (Jahanfo Sirikpamo) with the assistance from a Konkomba elder, poured libation for peace, after which they sacrificed a white cock and white ram on behalf of Nanumba and a red cock and brown goat on behalf of Konkomba, to ask the earth for forgiveness.<sup>107</sup> After that, Konkomba and Nanumba women planted a peace tree in the Bimbilla market (which died during dry season because no-one watered it). Rawlings spoke about development in Ghana, which KOYA and NAYA Presidents repeated. KOYA President Isaac Sukpen said that: ‘It’s sad to recall events which started in 1981 and quickly tore apart a once happy family of farmers and fishermen in a fertile and highly productive District.’ But he continued that ‘nothing can stop us from marching in peace as one people to help the District recapture its position as the leading food producers and the most peaceful in the country’.<sup>108</sup> This speech marked the beginning of a peace in which Konkomba and Nanumba spokesman would emphasise technocratic development.

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<sup>105</sup> GT (02-04-1996) ‘GES Demands Report on Closed Nanumba Schools’; GT (01-04-1996) ‘Nanumba Schools Hit by Shortage of Teachers’; GT (20-09-1997) ‘Nanumba, Konkomba Chiefs Enforce Peace Process’.

<sup>106</sup> Both these reconciliation ceremonies were tense due to disagreements over sacrificial requirements. Both ‘traditional’ reconciliations were marked by a mishmash of Christian, Muslim and ‘traditional’ performances and what came close to a political rally. GBC (20-12-1994) ‘Dagombas/Konkombas Peace’ (in: Akapule (n.d., a)); DG (22/12/1994) ‘Dagombas, Konkombas Resolve Dispute’; Ngula, Dan K. & Kenneth Wujangi to The Chairman, Permanent Negotiation Team on Conflict in the Northern Region (15-02-1995) ‘Dagomba/Konkomba Reconciliation Ceremony at Yendi on 20th December 1994’; Kissmal, Ibrahim Hussein (18-05-1996) ‘Peace and Reconciliation Ceremony in Salaga, May 18th 1996’; ‘Address by Konkomba Chiefs and People in the East Gonja District on the Occasion of the Reconciliation Ceremony Between Konkomba and Gonjas at Salaga on 18th May, 1996’. An earlier reconciliation between Gonja and Konkomba was cancelled because Konkomba delegates failed to show up, for which they later apologised to Rawlings: GT (16-09-1995) ‘President on Peace Mission to the North’; respectively GT (30-09-1995) ‘Konkomba Chiefs, Elders Apologise to President’.

<sup>107</sup> GT (16-10-1996) ‘Nanumba, Konkomba Seal Peace Process’.

<sup>108</sup> Sukpen, Isaac B. (KOYA) ‘Address by Konkomba Chiefs and People in the Nanumba District on the Occasion of the Reconciliation Ceremony between Konkombas and Nanumbas at Bimbilla on 21st September, 1996’.

Why was this ceremony not ‘from the heart’? Everybody knew that one cannot sacrifice to earth spirits in a school park, and that there is no central sacrifice to the land spirits of Nanun. The reconciliation ceremony was considered to be politicized; the speeches of authorities were mistrusted because they, the chairman of the PPNT, Rawlings, the KOYA and NAYA representatives were under suspicion. Finally the ceremony was considered both redundant, since there was already a peace accord and many refugees had resettled, and insufficient, because there were dozens of local reconciliations in the villages to be made (see chapter five).

Rawlings’ reconciliation was a way to regain a sovereignty in Nanun, which the routine law-preserving interventions of the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team and the Operation Gongong had failed to restore. Konkomba/Nanumba violence was a de facto sovereignty: Thousands of citizens took the law into their own hands and killed their neighbours with impunity. The NGO Consortium, in its mediated Kumasi Accord, made no single reference to law and order through security forces or arbitration and retribution, but rather a security emerging from consensus, which was locally received as a ‘pledge’. Rawlings’ administration could neither prevent nor end the violence in Northern Ghana. Konkomba and Nanumba generally interpreted Rawlings’ reconciliation as an attempt to save his own face, not surprisingly three months ahead of the general elections, and not as a sincere move to broker peace. His NDC suffered massive electoral defeat in the Nanun constituencies (see the next chapter).

## Conclusion

This chapter studied the cycles of violence and peace in Nanun between 1981 and 1996 from the angle of the peace clauses on reconciliation and security. In this chapter, we have seen how the cluster of related issues, which drove a wedge between Konkomba and Nanumba, first among themselves and then between each other, exploded into communal violence. These issues concerned the paradox between rights and obligations as citizens and subjects in Nanun, a paradox underscored by claims of equal citizenship and majority versus claims of autochthony. Although these claims drew on ethnicity, the next two chapters will show that both sets of argumentations tend to dissolve intra-ethnically. We have however seen how the contents of the conflict, a cluster of issues, has been more or less the same while they have been addressed in various forms, ranging from petitioning, to verbal expressions (or insulting), violence (the *kijaak/tobu* type described in chapter one) and dialogue during the Kumasi workshops. I emphasise this distinction between content and form in order to show how a conflict can be alternately politicised and depoliticised. In chapter six I will study why petitioning has returned as a dominant form of addressing these issues after 1996.

But let's first look again the outbreak of violence in 1981, which started as the Bimbilla Naa exercised what he considered his sovereignty, namely the violent displacement of Konkomba from Bimbilla by his warriors. This act of coercion had no precedent in Nanun and although it seemed to be a 'traditional' measure, it was in fact a new phenomenon. And so was its result; massive ethnic cleansing throughout Nanun by both Konkomba and Nanumba. The subsequent violence and non-violence in Nanun have to be interpreted bearing this experience in mind.

The outcome of the 1981 violence, namely, was a mutual sense of victimhood and insecurity, because the other was allegedly plotting against them. The return to multiparty democracy in 1992 triggered conflicts in surrounding parts of the Northern Region of Ghana and resulted in a widespread rumour that Konkomba were to chase all chiefly groups, vice versa. Tensions quickly mounted in Nanun and this time, there were no official warnings. While underlying the 1981 violence was a Konkomba demand for independent tribunals and a Nanumba response of imposing more customs on them, the 1994 violence broke out in a widespread mutual sentiment that their coexistence in Nanun had become impossible.

Contrary to 1981, when state intervention was just late and insufficient, in 1994 and 1995, both sides actually challenged the neutrality of the state. First, a Nanumba mob attacked the police station in Bimbilla and Konkomba killed Nanumba farmers in Nakpayili. This kicked off another round of violence. The situation was different from 1981, because it was individual criminal behaviour which escalated. This exercise of certainty became popularised: While the 1981 violence started as a penal exercise on the instigation of the Nanumba paramount chief, the 1994 and 1995 outbursts of violence started respectively with a riot and an ambush in Nanun's periphery.

The government argued that it had to restore law and order but it was actually fighting a war which it rather concealed. Along the way, as suspicions mounted about the security agencies backing the enemy, their violence became directed at the police (a Nanumba mob attacked the Bimbilla police station in 1994) or the army (Konkomba guerrillas ambushed soldiers near Chamba in 1994). The violence in Nanun was much more than a breakdown of law and order in a remote part of the country; Konkomba and Nanumba warriors took law into their own hands to create their own security. Behind the façade of keeping the peace and maintaining law and order, therefore, the national army had to win back its sovereignty in Nanun.

The challenge of the NGO Consortium was how to accomplish clarification and security without violence and without arbitration, which they though engendered accusations and counteraccusations. The Permanent Peace Negotiation

Team, as argued, was seriously handicapped not only by its allegiance to the state but especially by the state's delegated sovereignty in terms of chieftaincy which was the core of the conflict. The Team however investigated the legality of traditional and modern interventions without studying the paradox in the Constitution.

In Mamdani's terms, the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team premised that there were collective victims and perpetrators, while the Consortium's ideology was that in a way, everyone in Nanun was a victim and a perpetrator, but especially a survivor. Above, I have analysed the processes of forgiveness and healing during the Kumasi peace workshops. It was striking that the initial delegates were not the conventional ethnic spokesmen, mostly from the Youth Associations, but 'voices of reason' with their feet in unspoilt traditions. Contrary to the peace initiatives by the representatives of the Government of Ghana, which found security enshrined in the rule of law, the NGO Consortium, more precisely Assefa, thought that only a spirit of forgiveness and trust could lead to a real security anchored in tradition. However, this tradition was a representation of the past, both legalised (customary law) and modernised (by the Youth).

Another crucial point for the rest of this book is that the peace process focused on forgiveness, healing and especially confidence in the other. In that spirit, traditions could glue Konkomba and Nanumba together. This approach implied a suspension of mutual prejudices. However, it remains to be seen, in the next chapters, whether prejudices and stereotypes are that disruptive for Nanun's peace. While Konkomba/Nanumba coexistence has been, and continues to be, shrouded in morality, mutual sentiments of exploitation – Konkomba exhaust the land, while Nanumba are feudal – have just been a latent condition for victimhood about what they considered the illegal subordination of their autochthony or citizen equality. As I hope to show in chapter six, Konkomba and Nanumba mocking each other's character is insufficient for the explosion of violence, but feelings that their rights and entitlements are violated are not.

In chapter one, I introduced the distinction between calm and unity, which both Konkomba and Nanumba draw. I found that calm or reserve is a very 'traditional' way of solving problems, but it is eclipsed by a sense of postponement, awaiting a verdict. But in the process of waiting, there is a lot of peace in playing soccer, playing draft, drinking beer, dancing or watching cinema. As Skalník observed (personal communication), the current coexistence between Konkomba and Nanumba is far more dynamic than that before 1981. Perhaps this is the ad hoc realm of reconciliation. Leaving this issue for chapter six, we now turn to the security in 'traditional' earth sacrifices in the context of rights and prejudices in chapter five, but first the security in political competition in the next chapter.

## Political and administrative decision-making

*'Representation at administrative and political decision-making processes shall be by merit and following due process' (clause 3).*

### Introduction

In this chapter, I study the ballot box as the locus for Konkomba majority in Nanun, in the context of decentralization. As I showed in chapter one, Geschiere & Meyer (1998) described how elections may ignite tensions between autochthons and settlers, especially if the latter are electorally dominant. How does this work out in Nanun, where Konkomba constitute an electoral majority? In their September 1994 petition to the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team, KOYA executives complained that Nanumba had tried to prevent Konkomba from casting their votes in the 1992 elections.<sup>1</sup> And just before the May 1994 local District Assembly elections, which had been postponed due to the violence, Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II and the Nanumba Youth Association petitioned the National Electoral Commission to ask for the exclusion of Konkomba candi-

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<sup>1</sup> Wujangi, Kenneth *et al.* (KOYA) to The Permanent Negotiation Team (September 1994) 'Konkomba Position Paper on Conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana – With Reference to Nanumba-Konkomba Conflicts'.

dates and electorate; Konkomba should cast their vote in 'Saboba'.<sup>2</sup> The Electoral Commission refused this request and since then, there seem to have been only sporadic cases of Nanumba questioning the voting right of Konkomba.

This was the context for clause three, which deals with the 'modern' coexistence of Konkomba and Nanumba. As outlined in chapter one, Assefa sought a Konkomba/Nanumba peace in tradition, because he found modern politics not only alien to consensual traditional African forms of governance but also disruptive. This chapter however shows that political competition is not as dangerous for a tense society like Nanun as Assefa assumed and others suspected for a place where settlers are an electoral majority (Geschiera & Meyer 1998; Mamdani 2001). Certainly, elections in Nanun have been very ethnic in character: In chapter three, we saw how the 1994-1995 violence trickled down to the 1996 general elections. While president Rawlings won the presidential polls in Nanun, both incumbent MPs from Rawlings' National Democratic Congress lost their seats to opposition parties. However, that elections were ethnic does not mean that they jeopardized the peace of Nanun.

Looking at the clause in more detail, we read that political and administrative representation 'shall be by merit and following due process'. While a meritocracy is not the same as equal citizenship, this clause does imply that representation would be on the basis of personal qualification rather than on factors such as ethnicity, and that such representation would be according to the law ('due process'). The prescriptive tone in the clause is actually surprising, because the agreement is not just redundant (because it was secured in the constitution) but also unfeasible (the electorate has the right to vote ethnically). The tenor of the clause was however that Nanumba would not use their autochthony to prevent Konkomba from taking up modern political and administrative positions in Nanun.

Although the peace clause addressed 'political and administrative decision-making', emphasis during the peace workshops lay on the legislature and the right to vote. However, I will show how in post-1996 Nanun, the executive power of government has generated much more tensions between Konkomba and Nanumba than the legislature has, for two reasons. First, the executive was considered to be more politically neutral than the legislature. I will seek to show that the suppression of political competition in the executive has been more prone to tensions than the open legislative political competition. This analysis invokes Ferguson's theory of depoliticization in *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994), as introduced in chapter one. Although Ferguson concluded that the 'anti-

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<sup>2</sup> NDA/E/11/vol.2/101 Bimbilla-Na Abarika Attah II to The Chairman, National Electoral Commission (01-05-1994) 'Petition on Postponed District Level Elections in the Northern Region – Nanumba District'.

politics machine’ – the political impact of seemingly technocratic interventions – was an unintentional side-effect of development projects in Lesotho, the Nanun material suggests that apolitical administrative interventions may be a deliberate cloak for political control, thereby resulting in a fertile ground for conspiracy theories.

And second, while both the peace brokers and many peace workshop participants thought that ‘decision-making processes’ happened in the national capital, hence for example the Youth Associations’ presence in Accra, there has been a significant transfer of ‘decision-making processes’ or sovereignty from the national capital to the local government District Assemblies as part of decentralization politics. This devolution sidelined both the MPs (see below) and the Youth Associations (see chapter six). In 2003, Nanumba district was divided in nine sub-districts; in 2004, Nanumba district itself was divided in Nanumba North (Bimbilla) and Nanumba South (Wulensi) district and in 2005, a poverty programme was drawn up for districts and sub-districts. In the Chamba dispute we will see the decision power of the District Chief Executive. So while Assefa wanted to look beyond the state, the state has become stronger in terms of security and development.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. For a better contextualisation of the topics of this chapter, I have chosen to present the sociography of Chamba town here. This town’s make-up backs the argument here but it also serves as an introduction for the cases from this town in the next two chapters. After that, I study the electoral history of Nanun since 1996 to show that political competition has not jeopardized the peace in Nanun. Rather, I try to understand the tensions generated by the so-called politically neutral decentralization politics and poverty reduction programmes. I will use the case of decentralization in Chamba and two cases about the installation of District Chief Executives in Nanun to inform this inquiry, and end with a brief conclusion of the main findings.

## Introducing Chamba

This chapter draws heavily on the ethnographic material from Chamba, because the people in this Konkomba-dominated town in south-western Nanun have played a crucial role in elections while often being marginalised in administrative reforms. Since 1996, all parliamentary elections in the Bimbilla constituency, which comprises the larger part of Nanun, have been decided by Konkomba voters in and around Chamba town, who constitute more than a quarter of the constituency electorate.

Between late 2003 and the spring of 2004, two main decentralization interventions happened in Nanun: First the sub-division of Nanumba District in nine area councils by November, which was followed by the separation of the District

itself in two halves: Nanumba North and South Districts. These were significant efforts to bridge the distance between ‘the government’ and ‘the people’ but as I came to Chamba town another year later, early 2005, this large Konkomba-dominated town was still shrouded in disappointment over the decentralization policies. While some Konkomba had hoped for a district demarcation around Chamba rather than around the Nanumba town of Wulensi, most of them saw this division coming: The Nanumba North/South demarcation overlapped with the Bimbilla/Wulensi constituency boundaries. Rather, the real disappointment in Chamba was that, in spite of being the third-largest town in Nanun and the obvious hub in the south-western part of it, Chamba did not become the capital of any of the nine sub-districts. Instead, the ruined Nanumba chieftaincy centre of Dakpam ten kilometres to the east became the local area council capital and the old and crumbling colonial building – symbolically loaded because a notorious Nanumba sniper hid in this office during the 1994 violence – was repainted to house the administration.

Before elaborating on the parliamentary elections and the decentralization, let’s look at Chamba in more detail and especially how Konkomba became such a majority in this town. This section has a more descriptive sociographic character, which sketches Chamba also for the case studies I present in chapter five and six. I have chosen to centralise this material here, rather than in bits and pieces in the subsequent chapters. This section might therefore be used as a reference.

Chamba on an average morning: The latest Abu Sadic hit in Dagbanli (of which the Nanumba tongue Nanunli is a dialect) sounds from one of the bars. My Konkomba assistant rhythmically drums on his thighs, smiles and says: ‘They are crazy, but they do know how to sing!’ Meanwhile, Konkomba men in airy Nanumba-tailored kaftans walk their way to buy breakfast from the Nanumba women opposite the mosque, because ‘their porridge tastes so much better’. A glimpse in the other direction: A Nanumba man with stomach pain heads to the house a Konkomba healer, while the Nanumba earth priest Fuseini sneaks into a Konkomba bar to enjoy a calabash of sorghum beer. Despite this apparent normalcy, nowhere is the tension between a Nanumba minority of first-comers and a Konkomba majority of settlers more tangible than in Chamba.

This town is one of the most important Nanumba chieftaincy centres, as second-highest post (after Dakpam) in the hierarchical ‘house of the bangle’ (Banyili) chieftaincy lineage, which alternates with the ‘house of the lion’ (Gbugmayili) for the Bimbilla paramount chieftaincy. In spite of this chieftaincy, Konkomba currently make up more than 95 percent of the town’s population of 7,000. Chamba is the third-largest town in Nanun, after Bimbilla and Wulensi, both towns where few to no Konkomba permanently live.

It is however not the overwhelming demographic dominance of Konkomba, but the consistent return of Nanumba after each episode of violent displacement, which makes Chamba such an intricate setting. Contrary to other Nanumba villages in south-western Nanun, which have been abandoned and whose chiefs reside in Bimbilla, the exile of a chief as important as the Chamba Naa would be unthinkable for Nanumba.

Chamba exemplifies the realities of ethnic cleansing in Nanun's demography. Because so many Nanumba villages have been permanently deserted since the 1994 and 1995 violence, most Nanumba live within a circle some 10 kilometres in all directions around Bimbilla and in Wulensi and its environs. Few to no Konkomba live in or around these towns. As of 2006, the only Konkomba permanently living in Bimbilla were a medical assistant, a waitress and some teachers (not counting hundreds of students in Bimbilla's schools and teachers training college). Konkomba dominate everything outside the Bimbilla and Wulensi areas and they are de facto autonomous in large parts of it. Although many Nanumba continue to call Konkomba bush people, and indeed, any branch from the main road in Nanun takes you on a small path to farms with Konkomba homesteads scattered all over, there had been a significant relocation of Konkomba to the roadside facilities (notably schools, boreholes and markets) since the 1980s, resulting in elongated Konkomba conglomerates of which Chamba is the largest example.

In sum, the fault line between a Konkomba-dominated and a Nanumba-dominated Nanun runs right through Chamba and hence, this town's make up is a kaleidoscope for their coexistence at large. Hardly surprising, the first serious test of the 1996 peace accord happened in Chamba in August 2002, when the Nanumba chief (*naa*) of Chamba town used his position as 'the traditional ruler and custodian of the land in the area'<sup>3</sup> to install one Konkomba man as a sub-chief for the Konkomba communities in town, while the overwhelming majority of the Konkomba supported the son of the previous headman as their leader. That this local conflict so quickly brought ethnic enmity into play testifies to the symbolic position of this town (see chapter six). However, studying the political and administrative developments in Nanun also requires looking at Chamba.

Although both the Konkomba and Nanumba populations in town fragment in various kinship based quarters, they consider their coexistence prominently ethnic. As of 2005, the Nanumba community in Chamba had just over one hundred inhabitants in sixteen houses over seven quarters encircling the mosque. Most Nanumba in town were Muslims, while only a dozen individual Konkomba practised Islam, and no Nanumba had converted to Christianity, which many

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<sup>3</sup> NDA/P/28/Vol.2/22 Chamba-Naa Salifu Alhassan to The Regional Minister (15-10-2002) 'Chamba Konkomba Community Situational Report (31st August) – A Rejoinder'.

Konkomba practice. The word *yili* denotes both individual compounds and lineage quarters. While most compounds were inhabited by families made up of relatives maximally three times removed (*dogim*), these persons belonged to seven wider patrilineal lineages (*dan*); of the incumbent chief Salifu Alhassan, of the late chiefs Alhaji and Yakubu, of the earth priest Fuseini and of three butcher families.

Konkomba in Chamba also live together in kin-based quarters which usually bear the name of the ‘clan’ living there. For example, Kanjooktiib, the ‘Kanjook people’ from that Kikpakpaan village, live in a quarter commonly known as Kanjooktiibdo, the suffix *do* implicating place. Konkomba and Nanumba alike in Chamba tend to recognise sixteen Konkomba clan quarters (see chapter six), but due to blurry clan definitions, some ‘clans’ share a quarter, while other clans spread over various separate quarters.

The Kanjooktiib section had more than fifty houses in 2005, which were however distributed over six mostly endogamous and ritually autonomous sub-quarters. The oldest of these quarters is that of Bijoliib, which dates to 1965 and which had fifteen compounds in 2005. The 183 inhabitants claimed descent from an apical forefather called Dana, but they were loosely divided between the offspring of Bayuul and Dmamo.<sup>4</sup> In 2005, the eldest man (*uninkpel*) was the last living son of Bayuul, and he performed rituals on behalf of all Bijoliib as well as sacrifices to the Kanjook earth shrine on behalf of the wider Kanjooktiib community in town. The enormous population growth of Chamba has exhausted space in the Kanjooktiib and most other quarters, so that new houses are usually built on the fringes of town.

Comparing my survey material from the entire Nanumba community to that of the Bijoliib, it struck me that the latter are much more sedentary than Nanumba, especially youth. Virtually all Nanumba women married outside Chamba, mostly in Bimbilla and Accra, while almost half of the Bijoliib women married a man in town and most who did not married in adjacent villages. Perhaps more strikingly, more than half of the Nanumba young men had permanently left Chamba, again for Bimbilla or Accra, while no single Bijoliib man had permanently left Chamba. I found that while most young Nanumba were busy getting out of Chamba and no Nanumba settled in Chamba, most Konkomba were planning to stay in town and each year, hundreds of Konkomba from adjacent villages settle in Chamba, which they call, using English, ‘the city’.

In 2006, I counted no less than sixty new houses under construction on the outskirts of town alone, the majority of which were built by settlers from adja-

<sup>4</sup> Dmamo fled Kanjook during the 1936 French ‘pacification’ which killed some of his family members, and he settled in a village near Wulensi. Bayuul’s five sons joined him after their father’s death. When Dmamo died in 1965, his and Bayuul’s sons moved to Chamba, to flee a lingering family quarrel.

cent villages. While most Konkomba initially came to Nanun for its availability of farmland and water, recent settlers in Chamba told me that they accepted the chronic water and farmland shortages in this town, only to profit from its schools, market and electricity. Many of them kept their farms in the villages they left or started a farm in the southern part of a forest reserve fifteen kilometres north of town, which was recently opened for agriculture. Consequently, most Konkomba farmers in Chamba sleep on their farms throughout the week to come home only for the Friday market.

The settlement by Konkomba started in the 1950s, but none of the descendents of the Nanumba who received them were found to be living in Chamba. Consequently, none of the Konkomba or Nanumba living in Chamba knew much about the more remote history of this town. The historiography of most Konkomba reaches back to the settlement of one Fiindi; Nanumba with longest residency in Chamba are the descendents of a chief who came to Chamba in the late 1960s and these descendents turned out to hold little knowledge of, or interest in, the period before that. However, from various sources, mostly outside Chamba, I have been able to sketch its older history.

The issue of principal interest in such a historiography must be that when the first Konkomba started to settle in Chamba, this place was little more than a hamlet which had emerged three or four decades earlier and which was even uninhabited for some years. Some Nanumba elders living elsewhere in Nanun, mostly in Bimbilla, had partial narratives of Chamba's history. One version goes that Dawuni, one half of a twin, left his brother Danaa just west of Bimbilla to hunt for elephants. This was after the foundation of Nanun by Nmantambu. Dawuni allegedly entered a large forest (*cha mba* may mean 'go in') and settled there. When Dawuni died, he hung his powers in a tree, which became a shrine. At a later stage, one Bimbilla Naa installed one of his sons as the chief of Chamba (Chamba Naa) to rule Dawuni's offspring of earth priests. After an unascertained number of Chamba chiefs, Sulemani – the son of Bimbilla Naa Abarika I – was installed as the chief of Chamba. It was during the reign of Sulemani – he died in 1924 – that the villagers of Chamba resettled to the town's present location.

There may have been various reasons for resettlement, such as lack of water or relocation to a colonial-built path to Salaga, but several accounts of my interlocutors referred to one hunter Attah Shiariga from Bimbilla who killed an antelope at the present Chamba site of which he gave a hind leg to Sulemani. When Attah told the chief about the favourable conditions at New Chamba, Naa Sulemani decided to relocate to this new site and he made Attah Shiariga the earth priest. The present earth priest of Chamba claims descent from him. As Sulemani left, Old Chamba was deserted altogether, but the offspring of Dawuni

did not settle in new Chamba. Instead, they got dispersed over villages in south-western Nanun, such as Dakpam, Taali and Wulensi.

In a 1927 local British census, there was no mention of ‘old’ or ‘new’, but Chamba was located on the ‘road’ and it had only seven compounds.<sup>5</sup> Chamba’s population did not grow for decades. After the death of Sulemani in the late 1920s, two successive chiefs (Iddrisa and Natogmah) of Tuu village were promoted to Chamba. When the earth priest died in the early 1940s and Naa Natogmah was promoted to the Dakpam chieftaincy in 1943 (and to become the Bimbilla Naa not much later), no-one lived in Chamba for some months, until Issah became the new chief. Issah was a son of Sulemani and therefore no stranger to Chamba, but he lived in Nabaayili (near Bimbilla) and was a cattle trader, plying between Nanun and Kumasi. As he became the chief, Chamba grew to four compounds: The palace, the houses of the *wulana* (chief’s elder) and his brother, and that of the new earth priest. During the incumbency of Naa Issah (1943-1967), Chamba was however to experience a huge population growth, mainly of Konkomba.

While since the late 1920s, Konkomba farmers had settled in increasing numbers in scattered hamlets off the main north-south route of Nanun, especially around the swampy areas near Wulensi, south-western Nanun was covered in dense forests and almost uninhabited until completion of the Bimbilla-Salaga road in 1956.<sup>6</sup> A number of villages however emerged along streams between Dakpam and Wulensi in the 1940s. In one of those villages lived Fiindi, a middle-aged man born near Saboba, who had accompanied his father on his quest for greener pastures. While living there, Fiindi became friends with the cattle trader Issah. When Issah became the chief of Chamba in 1943, he invited Fiindi to join him there. Fiindi accepted the invitation but awaited the death of his father, which took another decade, and came to Chamba in 1953 with his wives, children and brothers.

Chamba Naa Issah called Fiindi his Konkomba elder (*Kpungkpaam kpema*), but subsequent Konkomba settlers would come to know him as *Bikpakpaan aatindaan* (Konkomba earth priest). Fiindi usually mediated between new settlers and the Nanumba chief and earth priest, who had to be offered respectively only a small amount of kola nuts (a metaphor for money) and a fowl (or money), and he also recruited Konkomba farm labour for the chief. It is significant to note the authority of Fiindi as Konkomba first-comer, among both Konkomba and Na-

<sup>5</sup> PRAAD/A/ADM.67/5/2 ‘Yendi – Village Record Book vol. I’ (1919-1930).

<sup>6</sup> PRAAD/T/NRG1/13/5/166 ‘Agenda for the 34th Meeting of Finance and Staff Committee to be Held on 7th January, ’56 at the Council Hall Bimbilla’. Prior to completion, there was a smaller path to Salaga.

numba. In this capacity, Fiindi, and later his eldest son, would play decisive roles in the Chamba chieftaincy dispute (see chapter six).

Completion of the road mentioned above diverted some traders between Saboba and Kumasi from the Bimbilla-Kete Krachi to the Bimbilla-Salaga road. One of them, Magati from Kujoon north-west of Saboba, traded livestock and dogs to Kumasi, and was impressed by the abundance of land and hunting areas in Chamba. He and two of his brothers, settled in Chamba as farmers and hunters, and as the second Konkomba family. Within a year, family members joined them, first from Kujoon and later from other parts of Nanun.

Magati was one of many Konkomba settling in south-western Nanun. Usually called Kumbu after the river between Dakpam and Chamba, the population in this area of around 800 square kilometres increased from 2000 in 1960 to almost 22,000 in the 2000 census, while the number of villages counted more than tripled. Although census results have to be taken with a substantial pinch of salt, interval results suggest that the Kumbu population grew with almost 10 percent per annum between 1960 and 1970, 6 percent between 1970 and 1984 and 4 percent between 1984 and 2000.<sup>7</sup> This population growth was almost entirely due to Konkomba settlement in the area.

The growth pattern of Chamba differs significantly from this trend. While in the 1960s, Chamba grew at a lower pace than elsewhere in the Kumbu area, probably because of the departure of the relatives of the late Naa Issah, Chamba's population quadrupled to over 1700 in 1984 at a staggering ten percent on average per annum growth rate. Between 1984 and 2000, the town's population tripled to 5200 inhabitants at an average seven percent per annum growth rate,<sup>8</sup> mirroring the population decreases in some surrounding villages. In terms of population growth, Chamba has no equivalent in the Kumbu area or in Nanun at large. What was so special about Chamba in the 1970-1984 census interval period? Five factors stand out.

First, in the late 1960s, the construction of a small dam east of Chamba, which was selected because the physical make-up of this spot made it the cheapest place in south-western Nanun to build a dam, triggered the settlement of dozens of small families. Most of them came from nearby waterlogged areas and found in Chamba a combination of fertile land and reliable access to water without being cut off from the outside world. Over the 1970s, these fifteen main Konkomba quarters drastically grew in size as relatives joined them, due to the following reasons.

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<sup>7</sup> The 1970 census gave an overall population of 5276 in 18 villages, and in 1984, 39 villages together had 12378 inhabitants (Census Office 1964, 1972; Ghana Statistical Service 1989, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> The 2000 census gave Chamba a population of 5200 inhabitants, a quarter of which were detracted in the official figures because they resided outside Chamba most of the time (mostly in farm huts in Sofeya).

The second factor was the emergence of a market in Chamba. Naa Alhaji, who became the chief in 1967, was a Muslim, and he invited an imam from Yendi to start Muslim prayers in town. Although Hausa Muslims had been present at the palaces of the highest Nanumba chiefs since the early nineteenth century (Levtzion & Pouwel 2000: 100), very few Nanumba commoners had converted to Islam in Nanun until the 1970s, while widespread conversion did not commence until the 1990s. In Chamba, the small Nanumba community largely converted to Islam in the 1970s, but none of the Konkomba did. However, Konkomba in town adopted the Friday holiday. When the wives of Fiindi and Magati, the early Konkomba settlers, began selling beer under a tree on Fridays, they started an ad hoc 'market' of Chamba. This market was no part of Nanun's six-day market cycle, which included Dakpam and Bimbilla as closest markets, but it soon became an important yam market and it attracted settlers.

Third, in the 1970s, witchcraft accusations ravaged many Konkomba communities in Nanun, causing many individuals to flee to 'town', which was usually Chamba (see the next chapter). In Bondaando village, five kilometres south of Chamba, more than half of the population, who were all related to each other, fled to Chamba or beyond.

Fourth, in 1976, the German priest Joseph Renner opened a Roman Catholic mission in Chamba. Although there had been Evangelical Presbyterian and Roman Catholic missions in Bimbilla since the late 1950s, their congregations consisted mainly of southerners. The German Fr. Joseph Renner had a budget for opening a new parish in north-eastern Ghana but local response was lukewarm in several larger Nanumba towns. As the story goes, Renner met one Jaglen Jagen from the Saambuultiib clan in Chamba, who initially wanted to purchase an anti-witchcraft shrine, until his elder brother (who had heard about the Roman Catholic Church in Saambuli near Saboba) told him to look for a missionary instead. Jaglen contacted Father Joseph, who was based in Bimbilla, and invited him to Chamba.

Within weeks, a dozen young Saambuultiib attended 'mass' in Jaglen's house. In 1976, Father Joseph got permission from Naa Alhaji to build his mission (Father's place, *Fadado*) on a large plot north-west of the village in a dense forest which the inhabitants of Chamba feared. Many Konkomba considered the cutting down of this forest as an act of bravery or even magic. Most Konkomba were however particularly enchanted by the Catholic clinic, which Father Joseph opened with the aid of German and Dutch nurses in 1978, the opening of a school and the distribution of foodstuffs and medicine in town.

Conflict was the fifth factor. While the combination of abundant and fertile land, reliable water access, trade and a market and a Catholic mission interested in the health and education of the community made Chamba an attractive town

for Konkomba, the outbreak of the 1981 conflict made Chamba the town it is today. When violence broke out in June 1981 in Wulensi, the small Nanumba community in Chamba fled to Bimbilla. There was no fighting in town but as some Konkomba fled to their farms, many others went to battle elsewhere in Nanun. Chamba also became a refugee centre for Konkomba from the Wulensi and Bimbilla areas, partly due to the relief efforts of Fr. Joseph, and many refugees stayed in Chamba, making it, like Kpasa, one of the most important Konkomba towns in Ghana after Saboba. This instigated the increase of Chamba market to the largest yam market in Nanun; Konkomba farmers massively refused to sell their yams to Nanumba middlemen, so that the nearby Nanumba-dominated market of Dakpam, which was burnt to ashes, ceased to exist.

Only a handful of Nanumba ever returned to Chamba, but the chief was not among them and he died in exile in Bimbilla in 1983. Naa Alhaji had not been on very bad terms with Konkomba but it was during his rule that Nanumba leadership in Chamba became somewhat artificial. While all Konkomba had come to meet Naa Issah as the chief of Chamba, they could not help interpreting the installation of Naa Alhaji, who was a complete stranger to Chamba, as an imposition. Although there are no indications of tensions in Chamba up to the late 1970s, the son of Naa Alhaji told me that his father feared the Konkomba and that he tried to refuse the settlement of Kanjooktiib and other 'French' Konkomba, whom he feared in particular. Biyenjin, the local KOYA activist, was among them and this certainly engendered mistrust between them.

From 1981 until 1985, there was nothing much of a Nanumba community in Chamba. The installation of Tuu Naa Yakubu as the chief of Chamba in 1985 led to a growth of the Nanumba community, with the significant inflow of butchers. Because one of the wives of Naa Yakubu came from a family of butchers (*nakohanima*), inheritance of which is usually maternal, some sons of the chief started butcher shops in Chamba and they stayed in town when the chief died in 1990 (to be succeeded by Natogmah Attah). The butchers continued to play a dominant role in Chamba, as a case in chapter six will show.

But let's put things in perspective: The humble growth of the Nanumba community was eclipsed by a refugee stream of hundreds of Konkomba from the 1992 Gonja/Konkomba conflict, many of who stayed in Chamba. When the 1994 violence broke out, the situation in Chamba resembled that of 1981: All Nanumba fled to Bimbilla, while over the next days, Konkomba warriors made Chamba their centre. As described in chapter three, the army responded to a Konkomba ambushing of soldiers by burning dozens of Konkomba roadside villages in Nanun and eastern Gonja, including Chamba. Because the military had announced a meeting in town, Chamba was packed and consequently, dozens of civilians lost their lives during this penal expedition. After that, the army

instructed all wandering Konkomba in this part of Nanun to gather in Chamba for disarmament and relief aid, but both failed.

It took Nanumba almost three years to return to Chamba. The first man to return, in November 1996, was the local chief butcher. Most other butchers also returned in 1996 and so did some of the relatives of former chiefs, but in each family numerous individuals stayed in Bimbilla or left for Tamale or Accra. As the first returnee arrived under military escort, soldiers brought him to the homestead of Nyilyar, the son of the Konkomba headman who had died earlier that year, and forced him to receive the Nanumba. Narratives from both sides however suggest that this meeting was quite hospitable and that Nyilyar offered his help in the reconstruction of Nanumba houses and in the provision of yam seedlings. Nanumba reception was however highly dependent on individual goodwill. Soldiers checked on Chamba on a regular (usually weekly) basis, just like they did in other mixed communities, but I have not heard of any tensions. There was no welcome ceremony, nor any reconciliation. However, as returnees told me, Konkomba funerals were occasions for joint entertainment. This memory of the joint celebration of Konkomba funerals is striking because it illustrates that contrary to what Geschiere and Nyamnjoh found for Cameroon (2000), funerals in Nanun are not at all enmeshed in claims of belonging (see the next chapter).

The incumbent Naa Natogmah and his family stayed in Bimbilla to await his 1998 succession to the skin of Dakpam (whose chief had died in the violence). Again, as after the 1981 violence, Chamba was without a chief for four years, until the chief of Lungni, Salifu Alhassan, was promoted to Chamba and, under military escort, introduced to Nyilyar, the acting son of the Konkomba headman, who had died in 1996. This is where the Chamba dispute started (see chapter six). The earth priest Fuseini arrived even later. He was born in Wulensi and had never lived in Chamba until he was called to office in 2000, when his predecessor had died in exile in Bimbilla. However, this is also the context for our next discussions of parliamentary elections and local administration.

## Electoral majority and maturity

As I argued, all recent parliamentary elections in the Bimbilla constituency have been decided by Konkomba voters in and around Chamba town, who constitute more than a quarter of the constituency electorate. Only the 2004 polls were decided in the Nanumba town of Bimbilla (one-third of the electorate), for reasons I study below. In each of the elections, except those of 2004, the winning candidate obtained more than two-thirds of the Chamba votes.

Strikingly however, as we will see, party allegiance was no significant factor. Quite on the contrary: The Chamba electorate massively voted for the People's National Convention (PNC) in 1996, for the National Democratic Congress

(NDC) in 2000 and for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 2002 (see table one)! This was not only at odds with the results of the Bimbilla electorate which was usually split over NDC and NPP with a slight preference for the first, but also with the results of the presidential elections which were held simultaneously with the parliamentary elections (see table two). As I will show, Konkomba massively voted for Konkomba candidates in 1996 and 2002 (and 2008) and for a Nanumba candidate in the 2000 polls in which no Konkomba contested. The 2004 elections stood out because the incumbent MP (a Konkomba from Chamba) was very unpopular among both Konkomba and Nanumba; while Konkomba in and around Chamba stood divided about their support for 'their' MP, the Bimbilla electorate massively outvoted this MP, while simultaneously giving a majority vote to his NPP party in the presidential elections.

Considering the weight of the Chamba votes, it struck me that Nanumba did not feel victimized by the Konkomba voting patterns. Rather, the general Nanumba interpretation I encountered was that Konkomba were immature voters, as shown by their shifting allegiances. Nanumba thought of themselves as a mature electorate, voting for party programmes rather than for individual candidates. Certainly, the ballot box had a symbolic value, although not so much as the locus for demonstrating Konkomba majority as citizens, but rather as the locus of Konkomba political immaturity. Most Nanumba interpreted the Konkomba voting results as immature ethnic voting rather than a demonstration of Konkomba majority. If they wanted to, several Nanumba told me, they could vote along ethnic lines too and show their electoral force. However, as they told me, Nanumba were experienced enough to dismantle politics as a game of promises and deceit.

Many Konkomba actually ascribed to such interpretations, by turning it around: They often interpreted Nanumba political divisions as a sign of politicised internal contestations, especially that of the Bimbilla chieftaincy dispute (see chapter six). Many Konkomba in Nanun were much busier working on their reputation as good citizens than with trying to get to vote in the first place. Certainly, in the post-1996 period, voter registration and access to polling stations continued to simmer among some Konkomba. The Electoral Commissioner, himself a southerner, accepted that at least ten percent of the eligible electorate in Nanun have not been registered, mostly Konkomba 'in the bush'. Although judging from my data, this theory of an unregistered reservoir of Konkomba voters is exaggerated, it is significant that while some Konkomba interlocutors suspected that registration teams, many of whom include Nanumba, systemati-

cally ignore eligible Konkomba voters, many others agreed with the general Nanumba argument that such Konkomba are not interested in politics.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, Nanumba fears of being outvoted by Konkomba settlers were eclipsed by paternalistic judgments that Konkomba were naïve voters; Konkomba accusations that Nanumba were using their autochthony to subvert Konkomba electoral majority were drowned in a general assessment that Nanumba were more politically skilled. Both the general Konkomba and Nanumba perspectives drew on a definition of politics as a specific realm imbued with competition, promises and deceit, and second on a moral assessment of each others' mastery of such political skills. These assessments did not produce mutual feelings of illegal actions of the other or of violated rights and victimhood. This was quite different from competition in depoliticized realms, such as local administration (see below) or chieftaincy (see chapter six). A crucial additional factor is that due to decentralization, parliamentary representation has considerably lost importance in Nanun; many crucial development and security decisions are no longer made in Accra but in Bimbilla or Wulensi (see below). But let's first look at an analysis of the recent electoral history of Nanun.

As typical northern constituencies, the initial loyalties of most Konkomba and Nanumba in Bimbilla and Wulensi lay with Rawlings' populist NDC. But while NDC won all presidential polls in Nanun, albeit with an increasingly smaller margin with NPP (which eventually won the 2008 polls), NDC won only two of the parliamentary elections in Bimbilla and one in Wulensi (see table three). There has therefore been a significant trend of what is called 'shirt and trousers' voting in Ghana: Voting for different parties simultaneously in the presidential and parliamentary polls. Another phenomenon in Ghanaian politics, the 'pull him down syndrome' applies here: No MP or party has won two consecutive terms, except in the Wulensi 2004 elections, where the incumbent MP had been in office for only a year due to mid-term by-elections. This suggests that the actual ideological differences between NPP and NDC are limited but that a dichotomy between these parties can be pasted onto all sorts of local struggles in the north (Kelly & Bening 2007; cf. Nugent 2001; Van Walraven 2002).

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<sup>9</sup> I have not heard speculations about the deliberate rejection of ballots. The percentage of refused ballots (an astronomic eleven percent in 1996 and still six percent in 2004) in the different polling stations of Nanun did not indicate ethnic exclusion strategies. I have not ascertained whether some people deliberately cast a foul vote, nor have I found evidence of deliberate rejection of ballots in specific polling stations. Moreover, I have not found significant differences in voters' turn-outs. In the elections since 1992, turn-out has seldom exceeded 65 percent, even in key bye-elections which drew nation-wide attention. As I found out during the local government elections in 2006, some people forgot to vote, while others were sick or had travelled. Yet others were not interested in casting a vote, some because they were disappointed in 'politics', others because they did not want to walk all the way to the polling station. In several polling stations, I witnessed voters who had left their ID-card at home and had to walk back for hours to go get it (few of them actually returned).

Because the opposition boycotted the 1992 parliamentary elections after accusing Rawlings' NDC of rigging the presidential results earlier that year, the Fourth Republican parliamentary history in Nanun's two constituencies Bimbilla and Wulensi actually started in December 1996, almost nine months after the signing of the Kumasi Accord. Electoral resentment over the 1994-1995 conflict became tangible in the elections: Both MPs, Mohammed ibn Chambas in Bimbilla and Amidu Seidu in Wulensi, who were both Nanumba, suffered defeat, while Rawlings' defeat was smaller in the presidential polls which were held simultaneously.

*Table 1* Parliamentary election results Bimbilla constituency<sup>10</sup>

	NDC			NPP			PNC		
	All	Bimbilla	Chamba	All	Bimbilla	Chamba	All	Bimbilla	Chamba
1992	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1996	23.5	36.4	19.2	30.7	61.1	9.3	45.6	0.5	70.5
2000	61.3	54.4	74.0	30.0	41.7	10.8	0.9	0.2	1.8
2002	36.9	53.8	25.2	58.3	41.8	67.1	2.4	0.4	6.2
2004	51.9	84.4	29.5	41.9	11.7	58.2	4.1	0.3	10.2

*Table 2* Parliamentary and presidential election results Bimbilla constituency<sup>11</sup>

	NDC		NPP		PNC	
	1992	-	59.8	-	8.2	-
1996	23.5	47.6	30.7	31.7	45.6	20.7
2000	61.3	57.9	30.0	33.4	0.9	0.7
(run-off)	(63.3)			(36.7)		
2004	51.9	48.1	41.9	47.6	4.1	3.2

Two opposition parties were waiting with open arms: PNC had two Konkomba candidates in Nanun and NPP had two Nanumba candidates! In Bimbilla, where Konkomba are an electoral majority, PNC (George Mpanbe) won, while in Wulensi, NPP (Sheini Iddi) beat PNC (Thomas Ogajah) with a one percent margin. NDC came in third in both constituencies. The ethnic voting patterns

<sup>10</sup> Electoral Commission of Ghana [henceforth ECG] (1992) '1992 Parliamentary Elections – Unopposed Candidates'; ECG (1996) 'Provisional Polling Station Results – Parliamentary, Bimbilla'; ECG (2000) 'Declaration of Results for the Office of Member of Parliament from Bimbilla Constituency'; ECG (2002) 'Bimbilla Constituency Bye-Election N/R/ 14 March 2002'; ECG (2004) 'Results of Bimbilla Constituency 2004-Elections, Parliamentary'.

<sup>11</sup> ECG (1992) Results Presidential Elections, Northern Region'; ECG (1996) '1996 Presidential Results Data Sheet, Northern Region'; ECG (2000) '2000 Presidential Results Data Sheet, Northern Region'; ECG (2000) 'Presidential Run-Off Results Data Sheet: Provisional Figures Released on 30th December 2000'; ECG (2000) '2000 Presidential Results Data Sheet, Northern Region'; ECG (2004) 'Results of Bimbilla Constituency 2004-Elections, Presidential'.

become clear if we compare the results from Bimbilla town (30 percent of the electorate, almost exclusively Nanumba) with those of greater Chamba (25 percent of the electorate, almost exclusively Konkomba).<sup>12</sup> This breakdown shows that the winning party PNC had an absolute majority in Chamba but won only 0.5 percent of the Bimbilla electorate! Similarly, NPP got over 60 percent of the Bimbilla electorate and less than ten percent in Kumbu (see table one).

*Table 3* Parliamentary and presidential election results Wulensi constituency<sup>13</sup>

	NDC		NPP		PNC	
1992	-	75.2	-	11.2	-	8.6
1996	25.0	53.3	35.7	31.7	34.7	9.5
2000	54.4	56.5	39.3	37.7	-	0.6
(run-off)		(57.5)		(42.5)		
2004	43.7	49.0	46.4	48.2	3.9	1.9

NDC contemplated this defeat and found a solution in coupling the Bimbilla and Wulensi elections. Nominating again the senior Nanumba politician Mohammed ibn Chambas in Bimbilla, the party submitted a young Konkomba (Samuel Nyimakan) in Wulensi. The party cleverly drew the support of PNC and consequently the Konkomba electorate, the latter which which shied the NPP anti-Konkomba rhetoric. With this approach, more than half of the Nanumba voters in Bimbilla constituency returned to NDC, but in Wulensi, most Nanumba did not vote for the Konkomba candidate and continued to support NPP.

This politics was quite coincidentally put to a test in two separate by-elections, first in Bimbilla in 2002 and then in Wulensi in 2003. In 2002, the Bimbilla seat became vacant because MP Chambas – who had been a senior Minister of State in Rawlings’ 1996-2000 administration – accepted the prestigious position of General Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja, Nigeria. By-elections usually draw national attention but the March 2002 Bimbilla by-elections had even more impact because of its importance for the incumbent NPP administration. Not only was this by-election the first popularity poll for Kufuor’s administration, but with exactly half of the parliamentary seats won in 2000, winning the Bimbilla seat would give NPP a majority in parliament.

<sup>12</sup> I decided to take as a unit the entire Kumbu Area for higher statistical reliability; the differences between Chamba town, greater Chamba and surrounding villages are not significant.

<sup>13</sup> Presidential: see above; Parliamentary: ECG (1992) ‘Elected Parliamentarians – 1992 elections’; ECG (1996) ‘Provisional Polling Station Results – Parliamentary, Wulensi’; ECG (1996) ‘Parliamentary Results-1996’; ECG (2000) ‘Parliamentary Results – Election 2000’; ECG (2003) ‘Election Results – Wulensi Constituency Bye-Election’; ECG (2004) ‘Parliamentary Election Results’.

NPP surprisingly renounced its anti-Konkomba rhetoric and submitted a Konkomba candidate, Dominic Nitiwul. Born in 1976 in Gungunpa near Chamba, Nitiwul was a Winneba (near Accra) University student. NDC continued its strategy of equal Konkomba/Nanumba candidacy in Nanun and nominated Mohammed ibn Abass, a Nanumba born in 1964 in a middleclass Bimbilla family, and who worked as a Bimbilla E.P. Teachers Training College lecturer and as the Nanumba Youth Association secretary. Konkomba were generally enthusiastic about the youthful Nitiwul, despite the strange NPP twist from anti- to pro-Konkomba rhetoric. Many Nanumba were confused about the NPP loyalty shift but many voted for Nitiwul (over forty percent in Bimbilla), because they did not want to fail the new NPP Government, which had supported ‘their’ Chambas in his ECOWAS application. Nitiwul won the elections with 58 percent to become Ghana’s youngest MP in history.

In 2003, the Wulensi seat also became vacant. On 15 January 2003, the Supreme Court in Accra disqualified Samuel Nyimakan as MP.<sup>14</sup> One Fuseini Zakaria, a Nanumba from the constituency, had summoned Nyimakan because he did not reside or originate in the constituency, as Article 94,1b of the 1992 Constitution required. Zakaria argued that Nyimakan was born in Saboba, schooled in Tamale, and employed in Chamba. Nyimakan defended that he was born in a village near Wulensi.<sup>15</sup> The case drew much attention, because disqualifications of MPs for reasons other than corruption were rare in Ghana and, as journalists remembered Wulensi as one of the hardest-hit towns in the 1981 and 1994 conflicts, media and the general public interpreted the Nyimakan affairs as an ethnic clash between Konkomba and Nanumba.<sup>16</sup> In reality, and this is important to emphasise, most Konkomba approved of Nyimakan’s disqualification and very few interpreted the disqualification in ethnic terms or as politics of belonging.

While NDC nominated another Konkomba candidate, it was the Nanumba candidate for NPP (Wumbei Kofi Karim) who won with a small margin. This was partly due to Nitiwul who campaigned for Karim, but also due to the inauguration of Charles Bintin, the Konkomba DCE for Saboba, as Deputy Northern Regional Minister.

The NPP victory in the Bimbilla and Wulensi by-elections triggered an electoral breakthrough of this party in the north. In the 2004 general elections, NPP more than doubled its Northern Region seats, including that of Saboba, the Konkomba ‘homeland’ and a typical NDC constituency. There, the NPP candi-

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<sup>14</sup> GW (03-05-2002) ‘Aggrieved MP Files Writ At Supreme Court’; GW (16-01-2003) ‘Disqualified MP Asks For Supreme Court Review’; GW (24-01-2003) ‘Are Wulensi’s Troubles Troubling the Superior Court?’

<sup>15</sup> GW (16-01-2003) ‘Supreme Court disqualifies Wulensi MP’.

<sup>16</sup> GW (24-01-2003) ‘Are Wulensi’s Troubles Troubling the Superior Court?’

date Charles Bintin was the District Chief Executive until he was promoted to Deputy Northern Regional Minister. The electoral promise that Bintin would be a cabinet minister made NPP win the Saboba polls and indeed, after the elections, Bintin became the first Konkomba cabinet minister ever (for Local Government and Rural Development). A Konkomba NPP candidate also won the Konkomba-dominated Kpasa constituency (which was central in the 1981 conflict, see chapter three), and this MP (Joseph Nayaan) was made the Deputy Volta Regional Minister. The victory of both Konkomba MPs is important for understanding the subsequent connection between NPP and Konkomba.

In Nanun, however, NPP had a hard time defending the successes of the by-elections. In Wulensi, NPP came very close to losing their seat, despite a set of very favourable conditions for the party. The moderate Karim had been the MP for little more than one year and earned the goodwill of many voters. Far more importantly though, the NPP administration had made itself popular in Wulensi with the creation of Nanumba South district. It was a truism in the NPP campaign that if you voted for NPP you got the popular Konkomba Thomas Ogajah for free as the new Wulensi DCE (see below).

In 2004, NPP copied NDC's one Konkomba/one Nanumba strategy, but inverted it by nominating the incumbent Konkomba Nitiwul in Bimbilla and the Nanumba Karim in Wulensi. Their main opponents were the Nanumba Abass and another young Konkomba candidate. But neither the NDC nor the NPP strategy worked: Nanumba voted massively for NPP in Wulensi and for NDC in Bimbilla, outvoting Konkomba in both constituencies. In Bimbilla constituency, NPP suffered defeat as the incumbent Dominic Nitiwul (NPP) and opposing Mohammed ibn Abass (NDC) contested the parliamentary seat again. This time, Abass won with a ten percent margin. The Nanumba electorate had been divided over NDC/NPP support in the previous elections and many Nanumba had voted for Nitiwul in the 2002 by-election, but in 2004, NPP was completely marginalised in the parliamentary polls in Nanumba areas. In Bimbilla town, Nitiwul got only a fraction of the votes, even though NPP came very close to winning the simultaneous presidential poll. Although Nitiwul won most Konkomba dominated polling stations, both Abass and a Konkomba candidate for PNC got a lot of votes in the Konkomba communities. Both in Konkomba and in Nanumba communities I heard of complaints about Nitiwul's young age and his failing respect for chiefs and elders.

After his defeat, Nitiwul decided to leave the country and he won a MBA scholarship in the UK. On 21 August 2005, just before leaving for the UK, Nitiwul organised a meeting in Saboba with Charles Bintin (Saboba MP and State Minister), Joseph Nayaan (Kpasa MP and Deputy Volta Regional Minister) and a number of Konkomba District Assembly members from Nanun. The take

home message of the meeting was that Konkomba should vote for NPP, because NPP was 'kind to Konkomba'. Three days later, Nitiwul repeated his message to party members in the NPP party hall in Bimbilla. There he told me that 'politics in the Nanumba area will be tribal for some time' and that Konkomba, as the electoral majority, would win this game. News of the Saboba meeting had reached MP Abass in Accra, who came down to Bimbilla the same day to inform his party members that NDC would never play the ethnic card. He told me categorically that Nanumba do not vote along ethnic lines.

At my departure from the field in early 2007, there was the foresight of an ethnic 2008 parliamentary poll in Bimbilla constituency, but glimpsing beyond 2007, we see how Nitiwul won the 2008 elections with significant Nanumba support. Abass had spent four years in parliament with variable success, especially because he belonged to the opposition. His charisma and young age made him popular among youth and elders. Through his former position as a Training College teacher he has the general goodwill of primary school teachers, who are often key opinion leaders in small villages. In Bimbilla town, Abass could draw on his family background to win the support of many elders. In reality, however, his pursuit of neutrality has made Abass rather invisible, whereas Nitiwul returned to Ghana late 2007 with a promise of more experience.

In Wulensi constituency, incumbent MP Karim retired and he was replaced by the District Chief Executive Thomas Ogajah, who believed he would become Deputy Northern Regional Minister if he won the elections. In sum, NPP had a Konkomba candidate in both Bimbilla and Wulensi and although the latter constituency had usually voted for NPP, things turned out differently in 2008. The Konkomba electorate got divided over NDC and NPP, while most Nanumba voted for former MP and DCE Sheini Iddi, who contested as an independent candidate and won.

The above chronology shows how competitive and ethnic parliamentary politics in Nanun have been, but also that they were not violent. Riots during the crucial by-elections were started by so-called 'macho men', or pressure groups from Tamale and Accra, while at the same time the turn-out percentages were comparatively low. Moreover, whereas many Ghanaians feared an outburst of ethnic violence during the Wulensi by-elections, Konkomba massively agreed with the disqualification of 'their' MP.

If one thing stands out in the recent electoral history of Nanun, it is the fact that no MP has served two consecutive terms, except the Wulensi MP who was elected in a 2003 bye-election and won the general elections one year later. It seems that MPs can only fail. They find themselves trapped in the expectations of the electorate. If they speak the language of the streets, people say 'it is just words', but if they stay away from the constituency, they find them arrogant.

Overtly speaking about for instance the chieftaincy disputes in Nanun makes an MP vulnerable to accusations for choosing sides but avoiding such topics results in accusations that either the MP does not know what is going on or that he has a hidden agenda.

It was a truism among many of my interlocutors, both Konkomba and Nanumba, that politicians cannot be trusted, and that they use all means to buy votes with the distribution of 'kola', drinking money, t-shirts, sewing machines or bicycles. Assefa was right here, but are voters aggrieved by this? I do not think so: MPs were usually addressed as 'Honourable', with an ambiguous undertone of both respect and sarcasm. Voters may promise to support a candidate and even wear a t-shirt with his face on it, but once in the booth, he or she may vote for another candidate. While politicians try to 'buy' their support, most voters do not mind accepting such gifts or benefiting from being a 'friend' or 'brother' of a candidate.

There are three additional reasons why MPs in Nanun seem to have lost their authority. First, with the senior politician Mohammed ibn Chambas as their MP from 1992-1996, citizens of the Bimbilla constituency were used to high expectations. But Chambas was unique; none of the other MPs, whether in Bimbilla or Wulensi, became minister and being an MP was usually their first political function. Second, MPs were not regarded as part of 'the government'. This was because the electorate in Nanun was mostly unlucky enough to vote for an MP from a party which lost the presidential elections. This was felt both in Parliament and in the district, because although District Chief Executives have to be politically neutral, they are appointed by the president and are therefore on his side. The 2006/2007 tensions in Nanun, which I study in chapter six, were partly eclipsed by a fight between the Bimbilla DCE and MP, because the latter felt excluded from key meetings.

Third, while MPs were 'our man in Accra', Ghana is a country where under decentralization, the government is coming to people's doorsteps. MPs usually arrived late when there was a local problem (even with a 4x4 vehicle, it takes a day to reach Bimbilla or Wulensi), while District Chief Executives were regularly to be found in Accra. They obtained significant local power of decision in terms of development and security. MPs were increasingly sandwiched between the constituents' expectations that he should in Accra and that he should be at home.

In sum, while many people in Nanun may not positively evaluate political representation, their attitude is not one of disappointment because in general, they do not accept the promises of politicians. So behind the divisions and tensions of elections, there may be much less contested reality (Ferme 1999; cf. Karlström 2006; Pels 2007). Hence, elections in Nanun can be competitive but,

in my view, they do not produce victimhood. This is quite different for administrative representation. On a final note, before turning the executive, the relative innocence of political competition in Nanun may not be comparable to other parts of northern Ghana which have lived through extremely violent elections.

## Decentralization and the exclusion of Chamba

In mid-2004, the Nanumba District was cut in half: Nanumba North and South districts, with capitals in Bimbilla and Wulensi. The new executive in Wulensi became effective a year later, with the installation of a Nanumba South District Chief Executive, who was a Konkomba (see below) and with the local government elections another year later in September 2006. But let's first look at the local government structure in more detail.

The local administrative make-up is divided in the executive and the legislature. The first comprises around a dozen officers and the District Chief Executive. The second, the District Assembly, is made up of elected members representing electoral areas (two-thirds) and national government appointed members (one-third). These members elect a presiding member, by majority vote, among themselves for a four-year term. In Nanun, the District Assembly sits once or twice a year as a kind of local Parliament. So-called 'Assemblymen' (most of them are men indeed) may however individually mediate between the communities they represent and the district executives. While the district officers are government appointed and few were Nanumba and none Konkomba, District Chief Executives are nominated for a four-year term but require the endorsement of District Assembly majority, in a 'confirmation' ceremony usually held a few months after the presidential elections (see below).

In the Nanumba North District Assembly, in which Bimbilla and Chamba are located, a majority of the elected members were Konkomba, while in Nanumba South District (Wulensi), Nanumba elected members were in a slight majority (see below). However, I heard widespread Konkomba complaints in and around Chamba that the demarcation of electoral areas in terms of the electorate/representative ratio had a Nanumba bias. Such complaints were fed by the selection of so-called 'appointees', most of whom were Nanumba, including women and dignitaries, members of other ethnic groups than Konkomba, and public figures such as the Bimbilla Catholic parish priest. Few appointed members however were Konkomba. In sum, many Konkomba I spoke to felt disadvantaged in the local government structure and especially economically marginalised.

This is salient in Chamba town, where Nanumba constitute only two percent of the population but where the chief, who has no formal role in local government, has managed to maintain closer ties with the district executives than the

Konkomba assembly member (see chapter six). In Chamba town, the Assembly member has always been a Konkomba since the 1988 local government elections. Anyone who is not a member of a political party, has no criminal record and who succeeds in collecting enough supporting thumbprints can register as a candidate with the District Assembly. No Nanumba has bothered to do so in Chamba for ages, because he or she would not stand a chance in this Konkomba-dominated town.

However, the main disappointment for many Konkomba was the 2003 selection of Dakpam and not Chamba as the newly established sub-district centre in south-western Nanun. As the yam truck full of supporters of the Chamba Soccer Heroes drove to the Bimbilla football pitch, they passed through Dakpam (see chapter one). Dakpam is easily the most ghostly and schizophrenic village in Nanun, especially by comparison to lively Chamba. Until 1981, Dakpam was really a town; it had over one thousand inhabitants, mostly Nanumba, a prospering market and several shops. As the highest chieftaincy in the Banyili lineage which alternates with Gbugmayili lineage for the Bimbilla paramountcy, this place was humbly boosted by British Native Authority. Dakpam however suffered enormously from the 1981 and 1994 violence: It was burnt to ashes twice and to date, ruined houses outnumber the rebuilt houses. No place in Nanun symbolises the Nanumba defeat better than Dakpam does.

Yet it was here that on 6 November 2003, representatives of the National Electoral Commission and the Nanumba District Assembly inaugurated the so-called Kumbu Area Council to cover south-western Nanun including Chamba. The establishment of Kumbu Area Council was part of the implementation of the 1993 Act 462 for administrative decentralization in Ghana.<sup>17</sup> Its realization ten years later was possible with funding from the NGO Action Aid. This intervention is characteristic of a changing development paradigm (see below). Kumbu is the name of the earth spirit which is believed to exercise control over this part of Nanun (see next chapter). All eight other sub-districts also bear the names of local Nanumba heroes or earth spirits: The Bimbilla area, for instance, is called Gmantambu, after the mythological founder of Nanun. These names had been proposed by the Nanumba District executive.

At the inauguration ceremony, local executives said that the creation of local areas was to foster development by 'bringing development to the doorsteps of the people'.<sup>18</sup> A pressing question in the Kumbu area was however, whose doorsteps were actually implicated. Although Chamba was the third-largest town in the

<sup>17</sup> NDA/L/67/14 Secretary (2004) *The New Local Government Concept. Kumbo Area Council*'.

<sup>18</sup> NDA/L/67/14 Secretary (2004) *The New Local Government Concept. Kumbo Area Council*'; see also NDA/L/67/10 N.I. Salifu (2003) 'Report on the Inauguration of Kumbo Area Council on Thursday, 6th November 2003 at Dakpam'.

Nanumba district (after Bimbilla and Wulensi) and the undisputed infrastructural and commercial hub in south-western Nanun, it was rather Dakpam which was selected as the capital of Kumbu Area. Many Konkomba from Chamba were greatly disappointed in this choice and although virtually all elected District Assembly members in this area were Konkomba, they still felt excluded from development.

This is because decentralization policies, which were aimed towards good governance, increasingly intersected with a global development paradigm based on the Millennium Development Goals, which not only gave new impetus to technocratic development interventions (drilling boreholes, building schools et cetera) but also, as Ferguson (1994) described for technocratic development interventions in Lesotho in the 1970s, gave new vigour to the state.

Although I have never seen the Area Council building opened, the Kumbu Council was to receive \$500,000 for the 2006-2009 period for the improvement of food production, school enrolment, health education campaigns, drilling of boreholes and constructing latrines and especially, as a precondition, the establishment of an effective administration of the Area Council.<sup>19</sup> To get this programme, which was aimed at meeting the Millennium Development Goals, across, the financiers of the District Assembly ranged from Ministries backed by the World Bank, bilateral and multilateral donors and various international NGOs. Without running into details about these partners, it is striking that all these donors teamed up behind the District Assembly. While it took the District Assembly years to regain control over conflict-ridden Nanun, the local government – with the support of the Bretton Woods institutions and NGOs – has in recent years been able to claim a central role in the development of Nanun.

Zooming out a bit, in 2004 and 2005, namely, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, with financial support from the Canadian, Danish and German International Development Agencies, conducted a nation-wide ‘District Based Poverty Profiling, Mapping and Pro-Poor Planning’ to pinpoint the ‘technical’ root causes of poverty.<sup>20</sup> When the project reached the Nanumba districts in 2005, it had the additional support of Action Aid.<sup>21</sup> Five days of interviewing should provide a ‘spatial and societal distribution of poverty’ to ‘identify core and subsidiary variables and indicators for measuring the incidence of poverty’.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Nanumba North District Assembly (n.d.) ‘Community Driven Initiative for Food Security (Kumbo Area Council). Programme of Action with Indicative Cost from 2006 to 2009’.

<sup>20</sup> ‘District Based Poverty Profiling, Mapping and Pro-Poor Planning As a Tool for Monitoring and Evaluation. LGPRSP Report 2007-03’, p. 5, 18, 10.

<sup>21</sup> NNDA (n.d.) ‘Poverty Profiling Report’.

<sup>22</sup> NNDA (n.d.) ‘Poverty Profiling Report’, p. 8.

Despite several setbacks – women were ‘shy’, farmers were at work, few respondents were literate, there was a lack of translators and many respondents misunderstood the exercise and expected money<sup>23</sup> – the research team described the five ‘key poverty issues’, reminiscent of those described in the national Poverty Reduction Strategy report (see below). These were ‘human resource development’ (the improvement of education, health and sanitation), ‘vulnerability and exclusion’ (the District Assembly standing for the equality of disabled, elderly, chronically ill, women, children and poor peasant farmers), ‘district micro-economy’ (tax raising, infrastructural developments and a better distribution of facilities), ‘production and gainful employment’ (subsidies on agricultural inputs and the stimulation of cash cropping, such as cashew, mangoes and cotton) and ‘governance’. According to the report, governance in Nanun was seriously hindered by (unspecified) conflicts, which required the deployment of more security personnel, unspecified ‘Alternative Conflict Resolution Mechanisms’, peace and human rights education by the National Commission for Civic Education and Civil Society Organisations, and finally decentralization to the sub-district level.

This programme brought new vigour to the state as the engine of modernization, particularly to local government. In its 2006-2009 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the central government of Ghana explicitly called for an improved resumption of the modernization economy of first President Nkrumah.<sup>24</sup> Before elaborating on this, I make a side-step to sketch an overview of the main development policies in Ghana from Nkrumah’s modernization to the pro-poor policies.

In the 1960s, Nkrumah had embarked on a socialistic modernization, giving the masses access to health care and education but also sacrificing the nation’s roaring cocoa and gold economy to import substitution industries and expensive welfare building.<sup>25</sup> A successful 1966 coup against Nkrumah’s 1946 self-declared single-party regime plunged Ghana in more than 25 years of intermittent military rule, broken by the brief Busia (1969-1972) and Limann administrations (1979-1981). Dependency theory, which blamed underdevelopment on western interests rather than on backwardness (Leys 1996: 11), took root in some of

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<sup>23</sup> NNDA (n.d.) ‘Poverty Profiling Report’, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005. An agenda for growth and prosperity’ (19 February 2003); National Development Planning Commission (November 2005) ‘Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2006-2009)’.

<sup>25</sup> The recently established Bretton Woods institutions (notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, IMF) saw that contrary to Europe under the Marshall Plan, the ‘Third World’ and Sub Saharan Africa in particular did not catch up, because – as they believed – economic growth required ‘modernization’ (Leys 1996: 9).

Ghana's subsequent military dictatorships, which by rejecting Bretton Woods recovery programmes, plunged the nation in ever deeper crises.<sup>26</sup>

Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, who had taken power by force on the eve of 1982 in a populist 'revolution', had little option but to turn to the IMF in 1983 after he failed to rally communist support (but he welcomed this ideological diffuseness to confuse domestic opposition; Hutchful 2002: 49). Rawlings' acceptance of an IMF (and later also World Bank) loan coupled with a so-called Structural Adjustment Programme in 1983 put Ghana on an economic path set out by the Bretton Woods institutions which it has continued to date. Between 1983 and 2000, Ghana concluded six successive Structural Adjustment Programmes, which focused on price and currency stabilisation and market liberalisation (Konadu-Agyemang & Baffour 2001: 21; Konadu-Agyemang 2001: 23-25).

The packages led to a dramatic economic recovery of Ghana over the 1980s, especially in the urban areas, and Nanun's rural yam market sky-rocketed due to rising urban demands. Already in 1988, the IMF/World Bank had pressurised Rawlings to organise local District Assembly elections, but these local elections triggered demands for a return to civil rule. Rawlings concurred and he won the December 1992 elections amidst international applause but also domestic accusations of fraud. The hopes and fears of political and economic liberalization have since given way to a shifting global development discourse, one which has worked out in Ghana as a strengthening of the state, particularly its local administration, in a renewed modernization discourse under the Millennium Development Goals (cf. Young 2003). The Fourth Republic inherited an economy suffering from the side-effects of structural adjustment. First, as the Structural Adjustment Programmes came with loans, Ghana's foreign debt sky-rocketed, and second, cuts in social services led to higher costs of living, a rise of unemployment and as a result, to more poverty (Konadu-Agyemang & Baffour 2001: 25-34). Since these effects were not peculiar to Ghana, the Bretton Woods institutions drastically turned to debt relief and poverty reduction, aligned with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals in 2000.

In 2001, after Rawlings had voluntarily stepped down after serving the maximum two terms, the new President (opposition leader John A. Kufuor) endorsed an IMF/World Bank poverty reduction programme for Highly Indebted Poor

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<sup>26</sup> When the pro-Western Prime Minister Busia adopted an unpopular 'Western' IMF/World Bank programme in 1971, which included a drastic devaluation of the national currency (cedi), he was overthrown by General Acheampong who revaluated the cedi and plunged the country in a decade or even worse economic crisis, exacerbated by the international crisis, and intermittent dictatorships. Between 1970 and 1983, Ghana's per capita income had dropped by thirty percent; in the north, plans for large-scale farming collapsed (Oelbaum 2007: 14). When in 1983, Nigeria repatriated a million Ghanaian labourers and harvests failed due to serious droughts, the crisis was complete (Boafu-Arthur 2001: 247; Ninsin 1996).

Countries (HIPC). Despite substantial critique (many Ghanaians found HIPC a derogatory term), the Kufuor administration presented its Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in 2003, which were entirely structured towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals. In 2005, as the HIPC programme was completed and Kufuor had been re-elected, his administration wrote a second PRS for 2006-2009. The targets of this paper were much more ambitious than poverty eradication: By 2015, Ghana had to be a middle-income country with an analogous standard of living. This ambition required a resumption of Nkrumah's industrial and agricultural modernization and vigorous human resource development (health and education), complemented with private sector growth (Kufuor's fancy) and good governance, especially decentralization.

Returning to the central argumentation: due to the global good governance and subsequent poverty reduction development paradigms, which Ghana has vigorously embraced, the District-level executive powers have been greatly increased. While many NGOs were trying to bypass the Ghanaian state in the mid-1990s, they teamed up behind a strengthened local government a decade later. This shift is apparent in the Action Aid funding of the decentralization policies in Nanun. In 2006, the Nanumba North District Assembly even endorsed a compulsory registration of NGOs with the local government.

These developments seem to run on a double depoliticization: The executive has to be politically neutral and local development interventions are increasingly presented as technocratic. Because both decentralization and poverty reduction were in its infancy as I left the field, future research would have to be conducted for studying their impact. However, in 2005 I had the chance to observe the tensions surrounding the installation of two politically neutral District Chief Executives in Nanun, while the 2006/2007 tensions from Chamba illustrated the tensions emanating from depoliticized development interventions. I study the first below and the latter in chapter six.

## The confirmation of a District Chief Executive

For a better understanding of the tensions generated by the suppression of political competition in decentralization politics, I present two cases: First the 2005 tensions emanating from the nomination of the first Konkomba District Chief Executive in Nanun; and second, the simultaneous politicization of the politically neutral 'confirmation' ceremony of the second District Chief Executive in Nanun.

Underlying these events was a major decentralization intervention in Nanun a year earlier. In August 2004, 28 new districts were created across the nation, bringing its total to 138. In this exercise of decentralization, Nanumba district – which was congruent with Nanun – was cut in two: Nanumba North (Bimbilla)

and Nanumba South (Wulensi). This followed a 2002 request of the Bimbilla regent Vo Naa Abarika Attah II to the Minister of Local Development to carve Nanumba South out of the Nanumba district to 'further enhance Government at the doorsteps of the people and quicken development and good Governance'.<sup>27</sup> For the first year of its existence, Nanumba South district continued to be de facto administered from Bimbilla but after the December 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections, the re-elected President Kufuor nominated Thomas Ogajah as the DCE for Nanumba South district.

Ogajah, a Chamba teacher who had contested the parliamentary elections in 1996, was to become the first Konkomba DCE in Nanun. This is significant: Although DCEs have to be politically neutral, Ogajah was a former politician. On a personal level, the distinction between legislative and executive functions is very flexible and the general public took notice of that. For most of them, both DCEs and MPs are politicians in different roles. We will get to that in more detail below.

However, on 14 June 2005, two weeks before the inauguration ceremony, six Nanumba phoned in during a live radio show on the national station Unique FM. They objected to Ogajah's candidacy because he was a Konkomba and advised him to run for DCE in Saboba. Although the NAYA president condemned the events in a breakfast show on Ghana national television (GTV) the next morning, a scandal was born. Konkomba in Chamba were outraged and said: 'I thought we had a deal: One Konkomba DCE and one Nanumba DCE [...]. Now we get one DCE and hear the noise they are making. In the next four years, we will take all posts from them.' In the following two weeks, Ogajah's candidacy was hotly debated all over Nanun and security personnel could only just prevent that the Wulensi chief, who backed Ogajah, was attacked by a Nanumba mob.

At the 28 June 'confirmation ceremony' in the Wulensi District Hall, Regional Minister Boniface Saddique summed up the so-called confirmation percentages throughout the Northern Region, none of which was lower than 84 percent. Although a DCE candidate is nominated by the President, he or she requires the confirmation of at least two-thirds of the District Assembly. The position of DCE is strictly non-partisan, but no candidate would be nominated by President Kufuor if his loyalties had not been with his NPP party. Rejecting the candidate would be interpreted as a rejection of the President. The Minister argued that Ogajah was a good candidate, memorising an unwritten deal of ethnic political and administrative equation of Konkomba and Nanumba representatives in the Nanumba districts. This was significant because such a political deal had been

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<sup>27</sup> NDA/L/11/v.3/247 Vo-Na Attah Abarika to The Minister of Local Government (19-02-2002) 'Request for the Creation of an Additional District Assembly – Nanumba South District Assembly Wulensi'.

proposed by both NDC and NPP but it was now cast in the non-partisan executive sphere too. In other words, the best candidate was not just the one with the best personal qualifications but also implicitly the one with the right party allegiance and the right ethnic background.

After the Regional Minister's speech, Ogajah gave a short speech in which he emphasised that he was born and bred in Nanumba South district and that he would always act in the common interest of the district. So doing, he tried to prove both his dedication as a Konkomba to the district and his dedication, as a former politician, to all citizens irrespective of political preferences.

After that, the assembly members voted one by one and the results were made public directly after that: 69 percent of the assembly members (17/25) voted in his favour, exactly enough to be inaugurated. This result significantly eased the situation in Nanun; after lunch, the inauguration team went to Bimbilla, where I found both Nanumba and Konkomba in a feasting mood. Assembly members in Nanumba North district, many of whom were Konkomba and had closely followed the Wulensi voting, rewarded Ogajah's inauguration with overwhelming support (90 percent) for their candidate, the Nanumba Salifu Saeed (see below).

Many people I spoke to in Nanun, both Konkomba and Nanumba, argued that the personal merit of Ogajah was eclipsed by his ethnic identity and his political allegiance to NPP. Many citizens of Nanun found the distinction between party politics and non-partisan administration a hoax and they called both the MP and DCE 'politicians'. The most important qualification of the candidate seemed to have been the presidential recommendation, which although presented to the District Assembly members as an advise was a bribe ('no king, no law') and an act of paternalism (the President knows which DCE is best for you). In sum, there was a whole field of politics behind the confirmation ceremony, which were masked – as a kind of anti-politics machine (Ferguson 1994) – by a technological confirmation procedure of individual assemblymen. Although Ferguson concluded that the 'anti-politics machine' – the political impact of seemingly technocratic interventions – was an unintentional side-effect of development projects in Lesotho, many interlocutors suggested that the procedural vocabulary in the confirmation ceremony deliberately masked these politics, thereby resulting in a fertile ground for conspiracy theories. An incident at the confirmation ceremony of Saeed as the DCE for Nanumba North clarifies this point.

Like that in Wulensi, the ceremony was attended by Northern Regional Minister Boniface Saddique, members of the Electoral Commission and several northern MPs and DCEs. The ceremony was held in the District Assembly Hall of Bimbilla to which the general public (myself included) had free access. The public then watched how forty assembly members were given a ballot by the electoral commissioner, walked to a booth in the corner of the hall, put ink on

their thumbs, thumb-printed the ballot, wiped off the ink on their hair, closed the ballot, put it in a box and returned to their seats. The phases of this procedure – except for wiping off the ink – had been spelt out by the electoral commissioner. However, when the electoral commissioner did so, one assembly member stood up and shouted that there was no need for voting because everybody supported Kufuor and wanted Saeed to become the DCE. The assembly member then asked his colleagues to raise their hands if they also did not want to vote, which about half of them did.

The electoral commissioner begged the man to take his seat and explained that under no circumstances could the confirmation procedures be skipped. Although some assembly members shouted that this was a waste of time, the actual point lay elsewhere. Namely, when the protesting assembly member was invited to cast his vote, he took his time: He did not put the ballot into the box but he walked towards the stage of the hall and put the ballot above his head for Saeed and the audience to see. As the audience went crazy with excitement, the electoral commissioner beckoned the police to have the assembly member close his ballot and put it in the box. After calm had been restored in the hall, the electoral commissioner said that this act was an insult to Ghana's democracy. The particular assembly member however had no intention to sabotage the election of Saeed. Quite to the contrary: This member had also applied for the DCE-position and by showing his ballot he demonstrated his full support to Saeed.

The secret ballot, as Bertrand, Briquet & Pels (2007) argued, has become the main technology and performance of such accountable elections. In the case described above, the assembly member found his secret and anonymous vote insufficient to remove suspicion from him. After the voting was over, the electoral commissioner opened the ballot box and removed the ballots one by one, opening them and showing them to the audience, which counted them aloud. As mentioned above, 90 percent of the District Assembly had supported the candidacy of Saeed. Dozens of spectators – Konkomba and Nanumba alike – stood up and started dancing and yelling; some of them rushed to Saeed and the assembly member who had opened his ballot and respectfully dusted them with washing powder. Again police had to calm the meeting to allow Saeed, all white from the powder, to give his inauguration speech. In this speech, Saeed said that he would not attempt to find out who had voted against him. However, in the following days, I heard many speculations buzzing about in the District Assembly offices, but certainly the assembly member who had shown his ballot to the audience was not among the names of those suspected of voting against the new DCE.

## Conclusion

The conclusion emanating from the above is quite straightforward. Political competition has not been socially disruptive. Elections may be tense, as Assefa argued and as recent polls from other parts of Northern Ghana have shown, but, judging from the recent parliamentary elections in Nanun, they may not jeopardize the ‘peace’ between Konkomba and Nanumba. ‘Ethnic voting’ has not been widely interpreted by Konkomba and Nanumba as using electoral majority to seize power, but – both electorates denying each other’s majority – they rather explain ethnic voting as being backward and vulnerable to political promises. Rather, the promises of good governance and bringing decision-making to the doorsteps of the people, and particularly their technocratic vocabularies (contrary to politicians saying it ‘as it is’) suppress politics and bear the conditions for disappointment, suspicion and conspiracies. This suppression or depoliticization can be so intense that people involved may want to unmask it. The case of the confirmation ceremony of the Nanumba North DCE, in which a former political opponent opened his ballot in public, was the most tangible example of this.

In Nanun (and not just there), some politicians are dressed as politicians, while others are dressed as administrators. The formal distinction between the legislative and executive powers has hardly any local reality. Most citizens in Nanun call both of them ‘politicians’ or ‘honourable’ and indeed, several MPs became DCE and vice versa. However, while parliamentary representation comes as it happens, local administrative representation has to be ‘good’: Citizens are entitled to the government which is best for them, but who defines what *is* best for them? The widespread Konkomba disappointment about the selection of Dakpam, rather than Chamba, as the local sub-district capital was a clear example of how contested the so-called accountable administrative structures were. I further elaborate this theme in the case of the 2006 tensions in Chamba, in which it came as a surprise for many residents of Chamba that the District Chief Executive had so much power, while he was so unpopular (see chapter six).

But before turning to this Chamba dispute, the next chapter studies the politics of earth shrines. In this chapter, we have looked at the ballot box as the locus for Konkomba majority in Nanun; the next chapter analyses the earth shrines as the locus for Nanumba autochthony and whether or not earth sacrifices have generated tensions in post-conflict Nanun.

## Customary pacification of the earth

*'Customary pacification in respect of river gods, land gods and grooves should only be performed by the recognised land and fetish priests or Tindanas of Nanun' (clause 8).*

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I studied the ballot box as the main locus for Konkomba majority in Nanun. This chapter looks at the earth shrines as the locus for Nanumba autochthony. This chapter is about the non-performance of earth sacrifices and it has been the most difficult chapter to write, precisely because I had to analyse something which was not done.

Consequently, this chapter might have a somewhat unstructured appearance, due to my meanderings through a cluster of related themes. These are more easily wrapped up than introduced: Against all expectations, the performance of earth sacrifice, which is the paramount act of proving autochthony, has generated no tensions among Konkomba and Nanumba since 1996, because Konkomba have not sacrificed at earth shrines which are under Nanumba custodianship. In that sense, the peace clause quoted above was successful. However, on closer observation, the clause invokes more questions than it gives answers and, as I registered, the issue of earth sacrifices suffered from a lot of local misconceptions and irritations.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. Due to the complexity of the material presented in this chapter, I start with a section linking the introduction to the

rest of the chapter, in order to contextualize the clause and discuss my conceptual approach to politics and rituals. I then turn to studying the peace clause in the context of the general demise of ‘traditional’ duties, obligations and prohibitions of Konkomba and Nanumba subjects in Nanun, which Konkomba and Nanumba blame on each other. After that, I describe the case of a Konkomba suicide in a Nanumba village, a case which contained all ingredients for conflict but instead showed how devoid of tensions the issue of earth shrines is in current Nanun and how many Konkomba in Nanun are much more worried about witchcraft (which allegedly drove the man into suicide).

From that case, I move towards a detailed analysis of the components of the peace clause, in order to understand what Nanumba mean with recognized earth priests, earth spirits and especially their customary pacification. This is followed by a study of the ways in which Konkomba relate to Nanun earth spirits and Nanumba interpretations of these relationships. After that, I put David Tait’s hypothesis that Konkomba are at home where they perform their harvesting rituals to a test. By describing a harvesting ceremony in Chamba, I will show that Konkomba relate to both local and their ‘homeland’ earth spirits in different ways and that many Konkomba in Nanun tend to seek the blessings from the latter as well as from anti-witchcraft shrines rather than from local Nanun spirits. In the subsequent conclusion I discuss the politics of performing and non-performing earth sacrifices.

## Conceptualization of the clause

Rawlings’ reconciliation ceremony in Bimbilla was probably the last attempt to appease the earth spirits in Nanun after the 1994-1995 bloodshed. But as I argued in chapter three, the pacification of people is not the same as the pacification of earth spirits. Local Konkomba and Nanumba considered the ceremony a political rally rather than a genuine attempt to reconcile the population of Nanun in the face of its spirit world. For one reason, there are no earth spirits for Nanun except many localised spirits, so the effects of the ceremony were restricted to the Bimbilla locality; for another reason, as I argued, school parks were not considered a valid mediating ground with the spirit world. As argued in chapter one, administrators from British colonial rule onwards thought that there were traditional inter-tribal reconciliation rituals in Northern Ghana but there were none, at least not in Nanun. Rawlings’ reconciliation was another post-colonial demonstration of this hope.

Throughout the villages of Nanun, however, people performed sacrifices to the earth spirits, not to reconcile former enemies but to apologise for the pollution of the earth (with blood) and to ask for its fertility. In Jilo, a Nanumba community east of Bimbilla, the earth priest organised the sacrifice of several black animals

on behalf of the village members. In Chamba, a Konkomba-dominated town from where the Nanumba authorities had fled, the son of the first Konkomba settler, who was locally called ‘Konkomba earth priest’, sacrificed to his father at the doorpost of his entrance hall, which is the prime invocation point for Konkomba ancestors, to thank him for his protection. After that, he consulted a Konkomba soothsayer to ascertain the sacrificial requirements of the Chamba earth spirits because the actual earth priest, a Nanumba of course, had fled to Bimbilla.

As rumours trickled down to Bimbilla, where the bulk of Nanumba had sought refuge, that Konkomba were performing such sacrifices, many Nanumba interpreted this as the ultimate Konkomba attempt to seize the land of Nanun. In his June 1994 petition to the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team, Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II wrote that Konkomba deliberately ‘perform sacrifices to Nanumba gods and violate sacred grounds, ponds and hunting territories’ as part of a KOYA plan ‘to eject the Nanumba from their legitimate land’.<sup>1</sup> The tenor of this suspected plot was that Konkomba tried to abuse the spirit world of Nanun to position themselves as the autochthonous ritual executives to whom chiefs are indebted.

As we have seen in chapter one, Nanun chieftaincy rests on an intricate myth of conquest and submission; the founder of Nanun chieftaincy is believed to have subjected the autochthonous population in Bimbilla and a number of adjacent communities, while simultaneously subjecting himself to the ritual powers of the autochthons. This myth is staged at critical moments in the *naam* (Nanumba chieftaincy), such as the installation, burial and funeral of the Bimbilla Naa paramount chief. During such moments, Nanumba ethnic autochthony is replaced by the strangeness of the children of the chief (*naabihi*) and commoners (*taremba*) as opposed to the autochthony of the so-called children of the earth (*tinbihi*).

As I describe below, this social stratification is duplicated in every Nanumba village by a complicated relationship between earth priests and chiefs. As the descendents of the founder of the village, earth priests are considered to be capable of mediating with local earth spirits at set shrines, and in this capacity working for the village’s well-being. Chiefs, whose career leads them from village to village, as part of the hierarchical chiefly lineages which alternate to the Bimbilla paramount chieftaincy, are ceremonially received by local earth priests. In this way, earth priests symbolize Nanumba autochthony and the link between the *naam* and its territory; Konkomba sacrifices at earth shrines in Nanun might bring this political constellation down. Many Nanumba feared this

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Joint Memorandum of the Nanumba Traditional Council and the Nanumba Youth Association to the Negotiation Team on the Ethnic Conflict in the Northern Region’ (June 1994).

politics more than the modern ritual politics of Rawlings, who organised an inauthentic yet harmless ceremony outside the shrines. Analysing these intricacies requires shifting from the native definition of politics (*polatisi*) to a wider anthropological perspective on politics as the actions to make or break social order (see chapter one).

This analytical shift of focus is relevant for studying how debates about earth rituals in Nanun oscillate between politicization and depoliticization. The issue of sacrifices has been entirely absent from KOYA petitions, and when I interviewed (former) executives on the theme, they mostly considered such Nanumba suspicions a diversion from the 'real issues'. During the peace process, therefore, there were mutual suspicions of exploiting the political reservoir of such earth sacrifices: Nanumba spokesmen interpreted Konkomba sacrifices to earth shrines as a way of ritually grafting themselves onto the land of Nanun and subsequently subverting Nanumba autochthony, while Konkomba leaders were suspicious of the weight Nanumba Muslims put on such a trivial issue.

This reality posed a serious analytical challenge. In preparation for fieldwork, as I read up on the theme of earth sacrifices, I expected to find public and politicized Nanumba earth sacrifices that manifested their autochthony and a ritual resistance of Konkomba. Numerous scholars working in the Volta Basin of Burkina Faso and Northern Ghana have recently shown that sacrificing to earth shrines can be a strategy for claiming autochthony, and its political or economic prerogatives, in a locality (Lentz 2006a: 14, 13, 3; see also Hagberg 2006: 123; 2006b: 112; Kuba 2006: 57-58, 63; Luning *et al.* 2005: 129; Mather 2003: 6; Schlottner 1995: 254). Such an approach suggests that earth sacrifices can be a strategy for making claims of autochthony, an insight which requires a reconsideration of classic Durkheimian theories, such as Tait's, which stressed the social stabilizing function of such rituals.

In classic anthropological theory, adopted by Tait (see chapter one), rituals were taken to be rites of passage, enacting a person's or community's transition from one social category to another in a sacred realm detached from daily life. Such theory subordinated the agency and meaning in rituals to the social structures they produced. While in the 1960s and 1970s, the French emphasis on meaning trickled down to Anglo-Saxon anthropology, mainly in the important work of Turner (1969),<sup>2</sup> a more radical critique on the study of ritual towards an appreciation of agency and improvisation, emerged in the early 1990s.

In his influential 1992 *Prey into Hunter*, Bloch copied the three-partite structure of rites of passage originally from Van Gennep and reworked by Turner, but

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<sup>2</sup> In 1977, Goody critiqued this position when he argued that rituals hold no key to deeper meanings. A few years later, Jackson (1983) challenged the idea that all performances considered to be rituals by anthropologists should have an explicit meaning to those performing them.

he argued that during rituals, time moved on and the historicity of rituals collided with that of the everyday social order. Consequently, Bloch argued, both the separation and incorporation rites are marked by social upheaval and violence. Bloch especially focused on the ‘rebounding violence’ through which the initiates have to conquer their new position in society. Bloch’s focus on the historicity of rituals was an important contribution to the field, but scholars have justly criticised him for not only allowing a formalised sequence of rites but also a distinction between transcendent history and everyday history (cf. Mitchell 2004).

During the early 1990s, four influential publications changed the study of rituals and, probably unintentionally, silenced further debates (Baumann 1992; Bell 1992; Comaroff & Comaroff 1993; Kelly & Kaplan 1990). Although each took an original approach, they similarly rejected the rigid distinction between the profane and sacred realms. Subsequently, they tried to historicise rituals by studying the power processes by which actors fenced off specific activities from daily life. In a brilliant study, Baumann (1992) showed how in a London neighbourhood a seemingly straightforward ritual like Christmas contained multiple messages and actions for the various groups of immigrants living in this plural setting.

The value of this approach for the Nanun situation is quite obvious and the plural historicity of rituals emerged from my description of a Konkomba harvesting ceremony (see below). However, the Nanun case suggests a distinction between the discourses and performances of rituals: The politics of earth sacrifices exceeds their inconspicuous performance. A research challenge which bubbled up during fieldwork was the question how to study sacrifices which are seldom performed, and I increasingly became aware that this chapter’s theme was not so much about the performance of rituals but about discourses of their non-performance. In this chapter I hope to explain this non-performance.

## Obligations versus prohibitions of subjects

Konkomba delegates accepted, in clauses one, five and six, that Konkomba in Nanun were the subjects of Nanumba chiefs, and that Nanumba were landowners via their paramount chieftaincy which is the preserve of ‘eligible’ Nanumba families. In return, Nanumba delegates acknowledged that Konkomba were not after the destruction of Nanun, but after its blessings, as ‘brothers in development’. Most importantly, as Nanumba delegates acknowledged the residence of Konkomba in Nanun, they cancelled the main difference between Nanumba subjects and Konkomba subjects, namely that the latter could be expelled from Nanun if they treated the authorities of Nanun with contempt. As such, Konkomba settlement in Nanun was no longer a privilege, as the 1978 Alhassan

Committee report had stipulated (see chapter two), but an intractable right as subjects of the chiefs just like Nanumba commoners (*taremba*).

Clause one of the peace accord stipulated that subjects in Nanun had certain ‘duties and obligations’ according to customary law. As seen in chapter two, these include tribute, arbitration and tenure. But the issue of tribute has proven to be very ambiguous. While the Nanumba delegation to the fifth Kumasi peace workshop compromised the tribute regulations (such as labour and harvest tokens) to the peace accord, the ‘Nanun customary law’ confirmed in clause one seems to reify such tribute regulations. The 1978 Alhassan Committee report, which described such tribute, is consistently used by the Nanumba Traditional Council registrar as the paper version of Nanun customary law.

In post-1996 Nanun, I found that very few Konkomba paid tribute to chiefs, but very few Nanumba subjects did so either! Most chiefs I interrogated on the issue complained about lack of respect and said that tribute now depended on personal will, while many Nanumba argued that tribute was outdated. In sum, an issue which was one of the main causes of the 1981 conflict, Konkomba refusing to pay tribute to Nanumba chiefs, has fizzled out because although Konkomba started to openly refuse such tribute, it had already highly been contested by Nanumba. The same actually goes for the issue of arbitration; chiefs have lost their formal judicial functions under Rawlings’ military rule and the subsequent Fourth Republic. Currently, Konkomba marital cases put a burden on the Bimbilla circuit court.

The issue of land tenure is no less ambiguous. Clause seven of the peace accord stipulated that the Nanumba Traditional Council, with Konkomba representation and ecological experts, would consider new land tenure regulations. Indeed, I heard many Konkomba and Nanumba voices calling for stricter land tenure and settlement procedures. There are no land tolls in Nanun because land cannot be owned, but village chiefs usually charged a settler some kola nuts (a euphemism for money). A recent change in the towns of Nanun, such as Bimbilla and Chamba, has however been the formalization of land transactions for building plots (but not for farms), regulated by the Nanumba Traditional Council. So while Constitution article 267 stipulates that traditional councils or chiefs’ offices should collect land revenues, also on behalf of the District Assemblies which receives around half of these taxes, actual collection is once-only for house-constructing in the towns only. In Chamba, a settler cannot build a house without a certificate from the Nanumba Traditional Council, which costs him around twenty euros for an average building plot. The local chief was the local Traditional Council representative but the procedure has to be endorsed by the Sanitary Inspector representing the District Assembly.

Contrary to other parts of the Volta Basin (see Lentz 2006a for an overview), land scarcity is still quite rare in Nanun and mostly restricted to the environs of the main towns. Nevertheless, I came across an increasing number of land disputes. For the time being, these are mostly restricted to villages where families have monopolised large areas of fallow land, but disputes between individual Konkomba/Nanumba farmers, which I came across several times, were swallowed for the sake of peace. It seems as if most farmers, both Konkomba and Nanumba, but also representatives of security forces consider loose land registration a threat to Nanun's stability.

While many Konkomba and Nanumba would welcome a more active role of the local government in land tenure, District Assembly executives I spoke to consistently bounced the issue to the Traditional Council. However, since the death of the Nanumba paramount chief in 1999, the Traditional Council has suspended most of its activities and the escalation of a succession dispute for the paramount chief has brought Nanumba chieftaincy to a standstill (see chapter six).

In sum, while the formal 'duties and obligations' of subjects in Nanun have been dictated by the 1978 Alhassan Committee report, which was never revised, my interlocutors by no means considered them as a traditional resource for peace. There is a significant discrepancy between the formal duties of chiefs' subjects, both in terms of tribute and tenure, and their actual compliance with these regulations. While chiefs tended to blame all their subjects, Konkomba or Nanumba, for failing to respect them, both Konkomba and Nanumba generally wanted a more regulated land tenure system and often blamed chiefs for inertia. In fact, Konkomba and Nanumba, both the peace workshop delegates and the populations they represented at large, seemed to agree on the inadequacy of tribute regulations and on the need for stricter land tenure regulations, although future land scarcity may well drive them apart on these issues. So while many Nanumba I spoke to argued that Konkomba have to abide by their subject position and that they are currently 'doing whatever they want', to quote a Nanumba farmer, the main responsibility for this, according to Nanumba, lies with chiefs.

But rather than specifying the 'duties and obligations' of subjects in Nanun, the peace accord erected a set of prohibitions for subjects. Most prominently, of course, prohibitions relate to the chiefly title to land, which is vested in the institution of Nanumba paramount chieftaincy, which is the 'preserve of eligible Nanumba' (clauses five and six). Rather than being challenged by Konkomba and/or Nanumba subjects, families eligible to the paramount 'skin' of Bimbilla themselves have been at each other's throats in a succession dispute which has been lingering since the early 1990s but which escalated after the death of Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II in 1999 (chapter six).

There is another and very intriguing prohibition in the peace accord, one which will be central to this chapter. Clause eight in the peace accord stipulates that 'Customary pacification in respect of river gods, land gods and groves should only be performed by the recognised land and fetish priests or Tindanas of Nanun' (clause 8). This clause was explicitly added to the peace agreement on the instigation of the Nanumba delegation and not just because several of the delegates came from earth priest families.

Invoking earth spirits for personal or communal well-being is very uncommon among Nanumba, maybe because massive Nanumba conversion to Islam since the 1990s, or at least public conversion, has increasingly put prayers in the realm of Islam. However, without trying to reify the classic dichotomy between Group A and Group B societies studied in chapter one, my research material supports the hypothesis that blessing has an intricate relationship to ancestor worship and that Konkomba, since their communities in Kikpakpaan were often kinship-based, have a much stronger patrimonial relationship with earth spirits than Nanumba do, in whose society only earth priest families maintain such relationships. However, for most Nanumba, not believing that earth spirits will be able to bless you is not the same as believing that earth spirits can do harm. I am yet to meet the first Nanumba, Muslims included, who does not think that earth spirits have the power, and the sovereignty, to punish a person or community after breaking the local moral order of the earth.

The Bimbilla Naa wrote about the 'violation' of 'sacred grounds' and when in September 1994, halfway between the 1994 and 1995 violence, the Nanumba Youth Association (NAYA) reported to the government Permanent Peace Negotiation Team that Konkomba from a village near Damanko had performed a sacrifice to the spirits in the Oti river, the Youth executives suspected a Konkomba 'hidden agenda to annihilate the entire district of ours'. Such interpretations were wide-felt in Bimbilla. In other words, many Nanumba found the sacrifices of Konkomba to earth spirits in Nanun the ultimate attempt to make this land theirs, but they also believed that this plan would not be successful. On the contrary, in the words of NAYA, Nanun would be 'annihilated'. I heard many Nanumba stories that Konkomba who performed such sacrifices 'went crazy', because they were punished by the spirits.

This Nanumba attitude of leaving the spirits alone clashed with Konkomba expectations of earth sacrifices. In Chamba, and in other Konkomba-dominated villages as well, several Konkomba interlocutors passed criticism on Nanumba chiefs and earth priests for failing to keep up the ritual bond with the earth. In Chamba, one of the contestants in the local chieftaincy dispute between and among Konkomba and Nanumba (see chapter six) repeatedly blamed the divisions in town on the reluctance of the local Nanumba chief to organise sacrifices

for the appeasement of the earth. The chief considered this criticism a provocation, in spite of his Islamic inclinations, because, as argued above, chiefs require the legitimacy from the local earth spirits, or the 'real landowners'. His reaction was that Konkomba should leave the spirits alone.

### The suicide case

The lack of tensions in earth sacrifices was clear from a dramatic Konkomba suicide which allegedly angered the earth spirits of the Nanumba village of Jilo. On a May evening, a Konkomba man from Chamba, let's call him Donkor, went missing in Bimbilla. He was on his way with his second wife to her home village in Togo, when their motorbike got a flat tyre in Bimbilla. Donkor told his wife to wait in town as he would look for a repairer. He never returned. His wife tried to call him on his cell-phone but she could not reach him, had the motorbike fixed herself and returned to Chamba. There, Donkor's older brother continuously tried to call him and when he finally picked up his phone, he sounded confused and said was he was leaving for Nigeria. He however also said that he would hang himself, broke the line and did not answer to subsequent calls.

That night, rumours of this phone call went through Chamba like wildfire and soon started a life of itself; some people speculated that Donkor had been killed by Nanumba. Within an hour, this very rumour had reached a community of relatives to Donkor twenty kilometres south of Chamba! Members of this community came to Chamba fully armed and prepared to attack Bimbilla. Once arrived in Chamba, they heard the details of the story and that Donkor had mentioned hanging himself. It was close to midnight and relatives of the missing man decided to go to Bimbilla and look for him first thing in the morning.

The next morning, anxiety went through Bimbilla at the sight of these Konkomba men armed with mattocks. After a quest of some hours, Donkor was found dead, hanging under a tree in the bushes of east Bimbilla. While everybody was obviously relieved that he had not been murdered, this case of suicide triggered a fear for the wrath of the local earth spirits. Suicide, as both Konkomba and Nanumba accept, is murder which angers the land. If the spirits of the land were not appeased, many people in Bimbilla feared, the spirits could withhold the rains from Bimbilla. It may be noted that at this moment in time, the rainy season had been rather poor and farmers were desperately awaiting the spring downpours to enable them to plant their seedlings.

Gravediggers from Bimbilla cut Donkor's body from the tree, and on that spot, their senior sacrificed a red fowl to appease the local land and a fowl of mixed colours for the protection of Donkor's family. Both fowls were paid for by the relatives of the suicide. After that, the suicide's relatives, in the company of local police, voluntarily visited the (Nanumba) earth priest in the village of Jilo, since

eastern Bimbilla has spread into the ritual territory of Jilo. The Jilo earth priest allegedly appreciated their visit and he called the suicide an accident. He continued that only soothsaying could clarify the sacrificial requirements to appease the earth spirits and proposed that they would return to Jilo at a later point in time for this.

After consulting the earth priest, the relatives of Donkor brought the corpse to Chamba on a motorbike and buried it that very afternoon. While burials in Nanun always take place as soon as possible, Donkor's elder brother paced up this particular burial, to cover up what he considered to be shameful events. The burial was however the talk of the town in Bimbilla and Chamba. Bimbilla citizens said that according to Nanumba custom, suicides be buried on the spot but the same statements rumoured through Chamba about Konkomba custom. The elder brother, as I learnt, was confused about what to do and had decided to bring his brother home and to bury him without shaving, bathing and dressing his corpse. He buried his brother at the right doorpost of the compound's entrance hall where all men tend to be buried, despite family elders warning him that the corpse should have been buried on the spot in Bimbilla or anywhere in the bush away from the house.

Meanwhile, a Bimbilla-based photographer who had taken a picture of the corpse hanging on the tree made a good profit selling copies of the picture to curious buyers on the markets of Bimbilla and Chamba. A variety of interpretations for the man's suicide rumoured through Bimbilla and Chamba. One version had it that few days earlier, Donkor's first wife had given birth to twins, who are perceived as a hazardous blessing. The most persistent rumour however concerned witchcraft: Either someone had cursed the deceased or the suicide had consulted anti-witchcraft shrines to acquire wealth, the powers of which had however turned against him. Therefore, most residents of Chamba, including Christians, eagerly awaited the final funeral.

Konkomba usually perform a final funeral ceremony around three years after the burial to end the mourning of the widows or widowers and to invite a soothsayer for going to the bush to mediate with the deceased's spirit and clarify his or her death cause, and the behavioural and sacrificial implications of this cause, for the bereaved. In this case, the suicide's brother wanted to perform the final funeral as soon as possible and so he did three weeks later.

In the meantime however, the family elder prepared a concoction in the *jabun* shrine, a horn with protective qualities from human and animal spirits and let pregnant women in the family community drink this concoction for having their foetuses protected from the suicide's spirit. Moreover, two weeks after the burial, Donkor's brother sent money down to Jilo for the pacification of the earth spirit

through the sacrifice of a sheep and a fowl. Neither he nor any other relative of Donkor participated in this sacrifice.

Another week later, the funeral was performed in Chamba and it was widely attended. The soothsayer ‘revealed’ that enemies had seduced the man into suicide. The soothsayer warned that danger had not passed: In the near future, a beautiful young woman would settle in Chamba and cause the death of any young man who would befriend her.

This case offers an insight into several crucial topics. On a general note, the case shows the dynamics of ‘traditions’, namely that they are not fixed but subject to discussion or even improvisation. The relatives of the suicide were not sure whether and how to bury the corpse.

Another intriguing issue is that many Nanumba in Bimbilla rumoured that the corpse should have been buried in Bimbilla. While Geschiere & Nyamnjoh (2000) saw burials as one of the main issues in discourses of autochthony in Cameroon, in this case there was neither a Nanumba attempt to prevent the burial of Donkor in Nanun, nor a Konkomba attempt to bury him in Kanjook, the home village in Kikpakpaan. Burials and funerals are a very rich and fascinating ethnographic theme and observations of such ceremonies are among my most impressive field experiences. However, much of them go beyond the scope of our current interest and I have chosen to shelve them for the meantime and touch on some general features important for this discussion only.

Contrary to parts of (more affluent) southern Ghana, where corpses can be kept in mortuaries for months, allowing the bereaved to organise the burial (De Witte 2001), Konkomba and Nanumba bury their dead within 24 hours, and corpses are usually not transported over long distances. Throughout Nanun, graves are in or next to the compound, except Bimbilla town, which has a municipal cemetery. Both Konkomba and Nanumba distinguish burial from funeral. Since funerals transform the dead into ancestors, no funeral is performed for victims of so-called ‘bad death’ (e.g. suicide, drowning or struck by lightning) (Jagri 2003: 12, 15; Zimón 2005: 68). This case was clearly a deviation.

While Konkomba funerals have a very localising character (during funerals, soothsayers escort the deceased’s spirit from the bush to the family house), such performances were absent in both Konkomba and Nanumba claims of belonging. The chief of Chamba regularly told me that ‘No Konkomba my age can claim to have been born in Nanun’, hence making allusions to cradles rather than to graves. And when this chief died at very high age in an Accra hospital in December 2006, a chartered vehicle drove his corpse to Chamba to have him buried there, in the palace (see chapter six). This transport of his body was exceptional enough, but the point here is that his entourage brought the corpse to Chamba rather than to Bimbilla, the chief’s birth place and his self-declared

‘hometown’. In other words, he was not buried where he belonged but where his career ended.<sup>3</sup>

The case also shows that Donkor’s family kept the *jabun* shrine in Chamba. My material suggests that such and other lineage-held shrines, including shrines for twins, were brought along or reproduced as they migrated. The invocation of ancestors can be done at the elder’s entrance hall’s doorpost and the significance of graves is minimal (but increasing under Christianity). Even final funeral activities tend to ignore the grave. Consequently, the invocation of ancestors, usually as prayers and during live-events, such as birth, name-giving, marriage and death, is associated with the house; much the same goes for Nanumba, who tend to invoke their ancestors in the elder’s compound yard. As we will see below, only earth shrines seem to link Konkomba in Nanun to their home village.

But while it seems as if Konkomba have brought their ritual system with them to Nanun, they have actually grafted their ritual activities onto Nanun. The final funeral of the suicide took place on a Nanumba ritual day called *kòfie*, which is celebrated on the 42<sup>nd</sup> and last day of the Nanun six day market cycle. This Nanumba ‘tradition’ comes from Asante, where the last day of the calendar was called *kòfie* (Twi for ‘go home’), and on that day unmarried women would not go to farm but perform dances. While the *kòfie* dances have gradually been disappearing from Nanumba communities since the 1970s, Konkomba in Chamba massively embraced *kòfie* as a suitable day for performing sacrifices and for general merry-making. This is in spite of the fact that Chamba market is not even part of this cycle.

The focus of the rest of this chapter lies however on some other aspects of this case. First, what struck me in the events was that so many citizens of Bimbilla and Chamba agreed on the necessity of an earth sacrifice to be performed in Jilo, even if most of them were Muslims and Christians. Second, once the corpse was found, all tensions subsided: There was no doubt about the relatives of the suicide to recognise the Jilo earth priest as the proper authority to perform such sacrifices, while this earth priest emphatically called the events an accident. However, although the relatives of the suicide paid for the pacification of the Jilo earth spirits, none of them participated in the actual sacrifice, while all and sundry participated in the funeral activities. Certainly, Jilo was thirty kilometres away but from what I could register, Donkor’s relatives were far more concerned with the hazards of the witchcraft than with the possible wrath of the Jilo earth spirits. While it is true that the earth spirits of Jilo cannot stop the rains in

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<sup>3</sup> An additional factor worth investigating in more detail later could be that far fewer Nanumba can walk to their father’s grave than Konkomba. During the wars, most Konkomba managed to bring the corpses of those who died in battle home and bury them there, but most Nanumba were incapable of doing so. Hundreds or thousands of bodies were buried at the spot, in mass graves, by soldiers, symbolising the defeat and displacement of Nanumba in Nanun.

Chamba, I doubt whether the earth sacrifices would have received significantly more attention if the suicide case had happened in Chamba town. The point I am trying to make, one I will explore below, is that for Konkomba in Nanun, the threats of the earth spirits are eclipsed by the perils of witchcraft. In the next sections, I will focus on earth shrines and witchcraft; first on the ways in which Konkomba relate to earth spirits in Nanun and then on the witchcraft accusations among Konkomba in Nanun.

## Unravelling the clause

Studying the ways in which Konkomba relate to earth spirits in Nanun requires a contextualisation of the Nanumba notions of earth priests, earth spirits and customary pacification, the main components of clause eight. Land or fetish priest are just two of many English, French or German names for what Nanumba call *tindana* and Konkomba *utindaan*, with earth priest the most common term (cf. Zwernemann 1968). It is difficult to translate *tindana*, because both syllables defy easy translations. The first, *tiŋa*, covers earth, soil or land, while *dana* straddles meanings ranging from caretaker to owner.

Rattray's idea, which I described in chapter two, that originally, all societies in the Northern Territories were led by earth priests, until small bands of conquerors disrupted this order and subordinated the earth priests to the chiefs in the centralised states, is still popular. Up to date, Rattray's idea that earth priests are apolitical and pure – but misrecognised and pathetic – community leaders, whose leadership would be a fine alternative to the corruption of chieftaincy continues to inspire scholars (cf. Awedoba 2003; Bogner 2000: 197; Brukum 2000: 145; Kasanga 1994, Kasanga & Kotey 2000; Wilks 1989: 18). Many earth priests I have spoken to have embraced their image of authenticity amidst the chieftaincy crises in Nanun (see chapter six).

While many Nanumba would believe that the number of earth priests was fixed during the foundation of Nanun, this perception requires adjustment because many villages came into existence much later, hence creating earth priest positions. When Nmantambu conquered Nanun, he allegedly encountered only a dozen or so communities of 'children of the earth' (*tinbihi*). Except in Nabunsi, which was renamed Bimbilla, the newcomers feared the spiritual powers of the 'children of the earth' and settled far away from them. Leaders of the 'children of the earth' (e.g. the Dalana of Dalaanyili), are not ranked in conventional chieftaincy (that of Nmantambu), and they perform important duties at critical moments of chieftaincy, such as the burial of the Bimbilla Naa. Although Nanumba chieftaincy itself is also shot through with spiritual powers, many Nanumba fear these autochthons. Skalník (1996: 115) recalled for the 1983 funeral that

‘The autochthonous ritualists virtually reigned over Bimbilla town during the *naakuli* (funeral). The town was in tension and everybody feared them. The people of the *naam* were reminded that the autochthons control them ritually and the *naam* could not continue without them’.

There are earth priests in such ‘children of the earth’ communities but also in ‘new’ villages. In the village of Dakpam, for instance, both the chief and the earth priest descend from the fat (i.e. strong) man (*do kpam*) who first settled here. But when Natogmah was made the Dakpam Naa in 1995, the earth priest (Natogmah’s cousin) stopped him at the school park east of the village and told him to ask permission to enter the village because he was a stranger (*sana*). In this role-play, the earth priest did not care that Natogmah was actually born and bred in Dakpam, nor that he was a very ‘fat man’ (as former MP). As a chief coming from another chieftaincy (Chamba), Natogmah was a stranger, but more dramatically, he was the embodiment of Nmantambu, the first chief of Nanun and a stranger. After this dramatic reception, there happened a role-play gender inversion between Natogmah and his cousin. Chiefs usually addressed ‘children of the earth’ leaders as *yidana*, meaning landlord or husband (cf. Skalník 1987: 309), while calling earth priests their ‘wives’, sitting at his feet next to the tom-tom beaters and palace elders and catering for his well-being.

As seen in the previous chapter, the population of Chamba resettled from ‘old’ to ‘new’ Chamba at some point in history, thereby creating a new first-comer and a new lineage of earth priests. While the current earth priest is the exclusive custodian of three shrines within the confines of the town, he recognised the superiority of the earth priest of Dakpam, who is the exclusive custodian of Kumbu spirit, which is believed to exalt power over all south-western Nanun, including Chamba. This situation suggests processes of earth-related fission and hierarchy, which are important for the Konkomba case below.

The peace clause specified that earth priests have to be ‘recognised’ but there is no public installation ceremony or record-keeping of earth priests. No-one knew the exact number of earth priests in Nanun, but Nanumba interlocutors usually started to count Nanumba villages or chieftaincy skins. Most Nanumba considered earth priests (*tindanima*) as part of a chief’s entourage, like the 1978 Alhassan Committee had stipulated. However, chiefs do not select earth priests. In some first-comer lineages, usually where the earth spirit is of ancestral origin, the eldest men automatically becomes the earth priest, while in others, where the earth spirit is believed to be a territorial force, the earth spirit is believed to select the priest. The latter happened to Fuseini, a Muslim in Wulensi, who after breaking his leg found out through a soothsayer that he should become the earth priest in Chamba (his mother’s father had been the priest in the past). No-one envied him: Mediating with earth spirits, is dangerous, but refusing their call may be lethal.

Earth priests may interact with the earth spirits of a locality at specific meeting places or shrines. While the peace clause captured these as ‘river gods, land gods and grooves [sic]’, there is a difference between the gods (or spirits) and the shrines (groves or river banks) where they can be invoked. In other words, there is a difference between an earth spirit (*wuni*) and an earth shrine (*tinbani*, or *buyli*). Shrines are usually groves or single trees marked by a stone onto which oblations can be made. Most shrines are in or near the village, sometimes representing a site farther away in the bush. Although these shrines can usually be discerned in the landscape, especially during dry season when surrounding grass is cut to protect the shrine from bushfires, they are never fenced off and animals roam there.

While some spirits in Nanun are believed to be connected to inherent spiritual power, e.g. a pool with a helpful crocodile, most tend to be ancestral (the founder of the village). Most respondents said no more than that they are invisible powers that transform into physical appearances (usually a reptile) when they need a sacrifice. I found that God (Naawuni, ‘chief spirit’) takes a prominent role in earth oblations, which usually started with his invocation. This may be in line with the massive influence of Islam. Many converts described Islam as a shortcut to God, and non-Muslims increasingly perceive earth spirits as a third mediation of God, next to Mohammed and Jesus.

The third part of the clause is crucial: What is customary pacification? Although this was not made explicit, the term refers to the 1978 Alhassan Committee report which stipulated that

‘All chiefs have Tindanas. It is their responsibility to consult sooth-sayers and report to their respective chiefs on the requirements of the sacrifice to be made. The chiefs then procure the necessary items for them to perform the rites to sustain the fertility of the land and prevent its pollution. They also appease the gods against offences committed by people.’

Pacification has no indigenous translation, but its description comes close to what many Nanumba would call sacrifice. Ritualised activities in earth shrines centre on two kinds of liquid oblations: Blood (of ritually slaughtered animals) and alcohol (typically gin, adapted from Asante whose spirits have come to prefer Dutch *jenever*). The distinction between alcohol and blood represents the difference between pouring libation (NAN *kom bayibu*; LIK *kper*) and sacrificing (NAN *maligu*; LIK *kitork*) (Goody 1971; Hubert & Mauss 1964: 9-12), and between prayer (libation) and making requests (sacrifice). But while all sacrifices are preceded by libation, not all libations are followed by sacrifice. It has to be noted that after the sacrifice of the victim – usually poultry but sometimes sheep, goats or cows – the feathers or hair and the bones and blood are left at the shrine

for the spirit but the meat is roasted and all community members can come to eat, which – since meat is scarce – many do, including Muslims or Christians.

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of requests from earth spirits: For the present, when sacrifice immediately follows libation, or for the future, when clients make a libation or ‘water promise’ (if I get a good harvest I will return with a fowl in December). Requests for the future can be made by entire communities but usually, clients are individuals or families who ask an earth priest to perform a water promise. Immediate sacrifices are rather a communal concern because an angry earth spirit is believed to punish everybody inside its locality, usually by withdrawing rain from it. Such sacrifices come closest to what the peace accord described as ‘pacification’, and what educated Nanumba tend to call ‘cleansing’ or ‘purification’ of earth spirits. I found two situations which may require pacification: Initial pacification of undomesticated, and thus hostile, spirits, and their appeasement after breaking the taboos of such spirits. Only those who have performed the first pacification (first-comers) can safely perform the second type (earth priests). The main earth taboos concern the spilling of body fluids outside the house; sperm (promiscuity, adultery and incest), and blood (murder or secret sacrifices), but spirits may have specific taboos as well; the Kukuo spirit requires silence and darkness after sunset; consequently, women pound their *fufu* (a staple of mashed yams) before it gets dark and they light small candles.

My survey results from three Nanumba villages east of Bimbilla suggest that few to no Nanumba engage in water promises to earth spirits. For most of them, earth spirits were more capable of disturbing them than of helping them, so if possible they left these spirits alone. The entire agricultural cycle, from sowing to harvesting was concluded without the involvement of earth spirits, but usually with the ritualized bonds with twins and ancestors. Invocations of twins and ancestors have a much more covert character and are performed in the yards or even in the huts of family elders. I also found a probably very recent casting of Islam as the religious norm in these communities and few respondents wanted to be seen in or near the earth shrine as a consequence.

This is quite different with immediate sacrifices. The anger of earth spirits may make the locality barren and hence its ‘pacification’ is a communal affair. Earth spirits are believed to warn the earth priest about their sacrificial requirements, either in their physical presentation – usually as a snake, or, as in 2006 in Chamba, as a crocodile – or in the dreams of an earth priest. Either way, the earth priest would go to a soothsayer for the interpretation of such signs. Such communal sacrifices have to be paid by the village chief, who would charge the tom-tom beaters to announce the performance and to collect money. Although many earth priests I interviewed said that they have to weed the shrine to protect it

from bush burning at the beginning of dry season and subsequently offer a sacrifice to apologise for the burning heat, most such weeding is performed by the earth priest and his direct family members who offer a water promise which they renew every year until there is a draught. In most research communities it could therefore take years for such performances to take place.

It is important to emphasise that the chief was widely held responsible for communal sacrifices, even if the chief was a Muslim. Contrary to many commoners I interviewed, who felt the social pressure of being Muslims in public, many chiefs were expected to be ‘traditionalists’ in public and keep their Islamic faith to themselves. This paradox was most tangible in the 1999-2003 acting chief of Bimbilla, who in spite of being a devout Pentecostal (which was already exceptional for Nanumba), had to organize certain earth sacrifices. I found most chiefs embarrassed by these expectations but they dealt with this in different ways. Some openly ignored the earth priest and invited the local imam for prayers, others minimized their soothsaying consults, and yet others chose to have sacrifices performed in an inconspicuous way.

Things have become even more complicated by the effects of a lingering conflict about the succession of Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah, who died in 1999. The vacancy of the Bimbilla ‘skin’ implies that no other Nanumba chieftaincies can be renewed; consequently, as of 2007, more than half of the villages were without a chief (see chapter six)! Many Nanumba interlocutors interpreted the subsequent non-performance of earth sacrifices as a way of protecting the spirits from chieftaincy corruption. In this sense, pacification was not a performance but a non-performance, in order to protect the spirits from politicization, not only from Konkomba but also from the Nanumba acting chiefs, whose integrity and authority were often openly doubted.

## Konkomba and earth shrines in Nanun

What was and is the Konkomba encounter with earth spirits in Nanun like? Most localities were believed to have several earth spirits, which usually related to each other hierarchically. Chamba for example has three main spirits, which are all believed to be ‘children’ of the prominent Kumbu spirit of adjacent Dakpam. The quasi-autonomy of Chamba from Dakpam suggests a process of earth shrine fission in which chieftaincy plays a decisive role. This process is crucial for understanding Konkomba relationships with earth spirits in Nanun.

It is crucial to note that not all earth spirits in Nanun have ritualised engagements. I heard stories of Nanumba whose farms appeared to suffer from local spirits to which they, after consulting a soothsayer, offered gifts such as a container of milk. But things are more serious when people actually settle in the bush. Until the 1930s, large parts of Nanun were uninhabited, especially the

western half. It were mostly Konkomba who settled in these areas, either by their own choice or upon the instigation of the Nanumba chiefs in Dakpam and Chamba. A dramatic change is the increased definition of mutually exclusive boundaries between the various chiefly territories, usually – but not always, as in Jilo – coalescing with ritual earth localities (cf. Lentz 2003). Consequently, many Konkomba communities, who upon their arrival half a century ago were directed by chiefs to the bush and de facto outside Nanun, now are increasingly considered part of Nanun. Contrary to Lentz, who rejected the earlier scholarly statements for North-Western Ghana that in pre-colonial times, chiefs ruled over people and not over territories (Lentz 2006a; cf. Goody 1971: 30ff; Kopytoff 1987: 33), I found that the process of chiefs claiming territories for political status is probably of recent vintage in Nanun. This process entailed the transformation of ‘the bush’ from areas cut off from Nanun, to peripheries awaiting Nanumba law and order.

Upon their settlement in the bush, Konkomba were confronted with wild earth spirits. Bondaan, who founded the village of Bondaando just south of Chamba in the 1950s, had been informed by the Chamba earth priests about the presence of a spirit and Bondaan settled right next to its invocation place. After just a few years, so Bondaan’s son told me, the spirits disturbed Bondaan so much that he relocated half a kilometre to the north, but he continued his custodianship. When Lifale and Mboon founded the respective Lifaldo and Mboondo villages right next to Bondaando in the 1960s, they recognised Bondaan as their earth priest, but they also found spirits in their own village to which they sacrificed themselves. In brief, all twelve research Konkomba communities around Dakpam and Chamba had earth shrines within their locality and earth priests attending to them.

The Nanumba earth priests of Dakpam and Chamba were aware of some of them but said that these spirits were of minor importance and that Konkomba custodianship was harmless provided they left Kumbu alone. Kumbu is the earth spirit which is believed to reside in the Kumbu river between Dakpam and Chamba and which is thought to wield power over the entire south-west of Nanun. The earth priest of Dakpam is the exclusive custodian to Kumbu at a riverside shrine, as accepted by the earth priest of Chamba but also by all Konkomba research communities around Dakpam and Chamba. Neither in Chamba nor in any of the surrounding communities have I ever seen a grain of millet, because the Kumbu spirit is believed to taboo the cultivation of this crop.

Konkomba earth-related ritualized activities and beliefs in Chamba and surrounding communities resembled those of Nanumba depicted above. A striking similarity is not only the similar conceptualizations of earth priests as custodians to earth spirits at demarcated earth shrines in a specific locality but also the

problematic translation of *utindaan* with earth priest. Konkomba also distinguished between earth shrine (*litingbaln*) and earth spirit (*litingbalwaal*) and I found that Konkomba also did not believe in a single earth spirit except multiple localized spirits.<sup>4</sup> Strikingly similar to Nanumba, and contrary to what Zimón recently found for Konkomba in Kikpakpaan (2003: 430), every Konkomba earth oblation I observed in Nanun started with the invocation of God (Uwumbòr, ‘chief spirit’). Another important resemblance is the sequence of libations and sacrifices, although Konkomba rarely use gin but rather pour sorghum beer (see below).

Konkomba also have three types of mediation with earth spirits: Honorary libation, water promises and pacification. In Chamba, while Konkomba regularly honoured the local earth spirits during libation, they almost never sacrificed to them. A beer libation after an interview may be telling. In the ceremony, a Kanjooktiib elder said: ‘Oh God, get up and take this water [he poured on the ground]; Chamba earth spirit, get up and take this water [he poured on the ground]; Kanjook earth spirit, get up and take this water [he poured on the ground]’. After that he said a prayer for our well-being and he finished his prayer by invoking all that are left behind to take the remainder of the beer and emptied the calabash onto the ground. After that, a boy distributed the beer among the participants.

While such Konkomba libations were quite common during my fieldwork, I never observed similar Nanumba libations. It is important to note that the elder invoked ‘Chamba earth spirit’ and not Saapuri, Bukuli or Butikpra (as the spirits of Chamba are called). Most Konkomba in communities in and around Chamba did not know the name of the local earth spirits and they called them simply *litingbalwaal* (earth spirit).<sup>5</sup> I often heard Konkomba reflecting on these spirits that ‘we don’t know them’. Both Froelich and Tait correctly found that for Konkomba, earth spirits have both a territorial and a patrimonial aspect (Froelich 1954: 179, 191; Tait 1958: 193). While these aspects seemed to overlap in Kikpakpaan, they were separated in my research communities in and around Chamba, where the inhabitants recognised the presence of local earth spirits without identifying with them. Konkomba in communities such as Chamba generally recognize the local spirits and those of their home community in

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<sup>4</sup> According to Zimón, earth spirits for Konkomba manifest the universal power of an earth goddess (2003: 430). Accounts of such an earth goddess, and a male rain god, have an attractive symbolic value (the earth impregnated by rain) and have been persistent in scholarship on Voltaic societies (Froelich 1932; Rattray 1931; Zwernemann 1968) but I have never come across such cosmologies among Konkomba or Nanumba.

<sup>5</sup> Monchuani, which is Nanunli for ‘inside Monchua’, is an exception. When Konkomba settled in this place, the chief of nearby Dakpam informed them about the local spirit’s name (Monchua).

Kikpakpaan. It is striking that any memories of their forefathers' mobility within Kikpakpaan appear to have been forgotten or deemed irrelevant.

Konkomba in localities not inhabited by Nanumba usually perform sacrifices to the local spirits only in order to keep them calm. The impression given to me by the inhabitants of such Konkomba villages is that by trial and error, they try to appease the local spirits with an annual sacrifice, usually before bush burning or at the end of the dry season. In cases of spilling of sperm or blood, they would also perform 'pacification' or 'cleansing' sacrifices. Konkomba do this in communities where no Nanumba live and not in for instance Chamba. As such, they know well in which places they were the first-comers and in which they were not. Theirs is not a deliberate attempt to become autonomous because for specific requests for well-being and thanksgiving after harvesting, they rather sacrifice to their home earth spirits, hence confirming their settler status in Nanun (see below).

However, a significant point lies elsewhere, namely in what many Konkomba consider as the failure of Nanumba earth priests to perform sacrifices. In Chamba town, the first Konkomba settler Fiindi was called 'Konkomba earth priest' (*Bikpakpaan aatindaan*) and recognised as 'Konkomba elder' (*Kpungkpaan kpema*) by the various Chamba chiefs. His role was to collect money for sacrifices and to sacrifice white cocks to the glory of the earth spirits at the building plots of Konkomba settlers. Fiindi's son Nmabini openly doubted whether Tindana Fuseini, a Muslim from outside Chamba, was capable of performing earth sacrifices in the correct way. There have probably been only two earth sacrifices in Chamba since 1996. The latter was in 2006, when a crocodile was seen swimming in the small lake west of town allegedly causing the draught in town. Tindana Fuseini however was annoyed by this suspicion and argued that living in Chamba for a long time does not imply knowledge about its spirits and that the earth spirits had picked him as their mediator.

While many Nanumba thought that Konkomba secretly sacrificed to their shrines in order to subvert the authority of Nanumba earth priests, many Konkomba argued that they only sacrificed to the shrines when Nanumba failed to do so, either because they were absent (during their conflict displacement) or disinterested (due to their Muslim inclinations). While Nanumba considered 'illegal' Konkomba sacrifices dangerous because they allegedly incite the earth spirits, Konkomba such as Nmabini found the Nanumba reluctance, of Tindana Fuseini, to sacrifice dangerous, because the earth spirits were not appeased. Both claimed to protect earth spirits from destruction and accused the other of outraging the earth shrines, either as a hidden agenda to seize the lands of Nanun (as Nanumba feared), or as a hidden agenda to draw the attention away from the real issues of the conflicts (as Konkomba suspected).

The leaning toward earth shrine purity has numbed the performance of sacrifices in the shrines, because in spite of its formalized and integrative semblance, earth sacrifices have an inherent political dimension, from announcement to the sharing of sacrificial meat. This explains the reluctance of many Nanumba to organize sacrifices: They are heavily divided among themselves – which they do not blame on spiritual causes – and fear the corruption of sacrifices.

## Beer and Konkomba homeland

David Tait expected that Konkomba migrants in Nanun recognised the land title of Nanumba and therefore did not start ritual relationships with the local earth spirits, for sowing and harvesting, which was the first step to political autonomy (Tait 1958: 173; see chapter one). In other words, Tait argued that the locality of Konkomba sowing and harvesting rituals symbolised their autochthony and political autonomy. I have studied this statement at length in the field and my material suggests that the most important harvesting rituals of Konkomba in Nanun centre on the harvest of an economically marginal crop (sorghum) and not on yams and that these rituals, although performed in Nanun, actually ignore the local earth spirits and rather reproduce the linkages between migrants and the earth spirits of the Konkomba homeland Kikpakpaan. A second important research finding was that thanksgiving after the yam harvest, which is the dominant Nanumba agricultural ceremony, is a recent phenomenon among Konkomba in Nanun. Contrary to the sorghum harvesting festival, such ceremonies neither produce a linkage between migrants and their home communities, and nor do they invoke local earth spirits. Instead, such rituals centre on sacrifices to personalised anti-witchcraft shrines and such ceremonies seemed to contribute to intra-Konkomba tensions emanating from witchcraft accusations. Let's study these findings in more detail in the following sections.

Harvesting in Nanun is all about yams, from the July 'first yams' signalled in the farms of southern Nanun to the digging up of millions of tubers, from a dozen varieties, between September and December. Since early colonialism, Nanun has been at the heart of the national labour-intensive hoe-farming yam producing area of Central Ghana and its surplus was traded to Accra. These days, a glimpse at Nanun's markets shows the importance of the yam trade; but when going off roads from Chamba, one can follow the tracks of the yam trucks into seemingly godforsaken places. Beyond that, inhabitants of waterlogged villages transport their yams to Chamba by swimming them across the streams.

Nanun's yam economy has attracted tens of thousands of settler farmers from Northern Ghana and Togo, especially Konkomba, who have come to dominate the yam economy in Ghana to such an extent that many of them told me that they 'feed Ghana'. This claim shows on the Konkomba Yam Market in Accra,

Ghana's largest single crop market. At this market, which was established directly after the 1981 by the Konkomba Youth Association, each Konkomba clan has its own market stall (thereby ignoring the ambiguities over clan demarcation). Currently, the market is the logical destination for anyone interested in buying or selling yams (also for most Nanumba), but also for Konkomba visiting Accra, who usually put up in the market sheds (or in the adjacent slum 'Sodom and Gomorrah').

Considering the economic importance of yams for Konkomba, it is surprising that the main harvesting festival of Konkomba in Nanun is actually that of guinea corn (sorghum). Whereas for Nanumba, sorghum thanksgiving is a marginal ceremony for a marginal crop, for Konkomba, sorghum and especially beer brewed from it, is central in Konkomba ethnic awareness and their political and ritual ties to their 'homeland'.

On New Years Day 2007, many Konkomba communities in Chamba performed a ceremony called *ndipòndaan*, literally meaning 'new sorghum beer'. Celebrated directly after the sorghum harvest, this festival is rather about beer. Sorghum is among the last crops to be harvested and its harvesting marks the end of the year, which is directly followed by a season of full purses and substantial leisure time. January to April therefore make the favourite season for festivities such as funerals and marriages. Such festivities require sorghum beer. In this way, the *ndipòndaan* (henceforth beer festival) marks the hinge between these seasons and it was no coincidence that most people performed it on 1 January. The festivities neatly fitted into the Christmas break which was celebrated by all and sundry in Chamba. Contrary to Konkomba in Kikpakpaan, who tend to distinguish sowing rites from harvesting rites (Tait 1953: 215; cf. Zimón 1989; 2003: 434-435), a distinction increasingly linked to Christmas and Easter, Konkomba in Chamba focalise their ritual activities in New Year. This does not mean that sowing is not ritualised at all, but rather that its significance is much less than that of New Year; as an interviewee said: 'During the beer festival, we do everything'. The reason for this is that contrary to Kikpakpaan, where yams are not much cultivated, Nanun's agricultural calendar lacks a real break because of the ongoing labour needed for yam cultivation.

A ceremony which I observed in the Bisanguum community in Chamba started at 8 a.m. Better put, it started at 8 a.m. for me, because when I arrived at the compound of Nyeuma (the Bisanguum elder), people were walking in and out, women were cooking breakfast and the elder was walking around. While the ceremony did not seem to have started, Nyeuma had already finished sacrificing a cock on his father's grave. Even before that, the beer used for the libations had also already been brewed in the past days, sacrificial animals had been caught or bought and announcements had also been sent round Chamba on the previous

days. So although a messenger had come to my house to tell me that the ceremony was about to start, when I arrived at Nyeuma's place, any temporal demarcation of the sacrifices from daily life struck me as artificial.<sup>6</sup>

After sacrificing a white cock on his father's concrete grave outside the entrance hall, and leaving blood and feathers there, Nyeuma went inside the compound yard for the other sacrifices. In the middle of the compound, eight calabashes representing the twins in the community were spread on the floor and Nyeuma poured beer to his ancestors for their support. Twin pots are associated with fertility and hence tend to be invoked during pregnancy or crop planting (cf. Froelich 1954: 217-219). This performance was probably moved from sowing to the beer festival. What I observed was how the mothers of two twins helped Nyeuma to sacrifice a black guinea fowl to the deceased twins and to empower the spirits of the living twins. After the sacrifice, in which blood and feathers were put on the calabashes, the calabashes were turned around and filled with beer.

Two sons of Nyeuma then brought a clay pot (*tiyar aasaambil*) into the yard, containing sand dug from the home village earth shrine (*linampal aatingbaln*). Nyeuma directly poured beer to the earth spirit. He complained to the spirit that his harvest had been so meagre that he had to buy additional sorghum to brew beer and he asked it to give him three huts filled with sorghum next year. He then poured libation to three other earth spirits, also begging their help, after which he took a guinea fowl, removed some of its feathers and put them in the pot with sand. As he cut the fowl's throat, spectators made all kinds of requests, from a yam truck to a flock of children. A nephew of Nyeuma, had a second guinea fowl sacrificed, to ask for a good harvest and a posh car, after which Nyeuma invited a young woman who had recently married into the family. He poured beer to the pot as he recounted that after the woman's baby had died, soothsaying had stipulated that she should plead with the earth spirit. Nyeuma begged for her to get pregnant and for the baby to live and promised to reward the earth spirit with a guinea fowl and a fowl in the next beer festival if she would give birth this year. As Nyeuma emptied the calabash of beer on the pot after this plea, he said: 'Show us that you are not just sand'.

After this, there was a significant change in the ceremony. As Nyeuma went into his room to change to a green shirt and pick up a bell, his younger brothers put a dozen of anti-witchcraft shrines (*tigari*), made of wood or clay and black from the sacrificial blood, from the room into the yard. While Nyeuma had been talking aloud in the previous oblations, he now whispered, so that nobody (not

<sup>6</sup> Scholars before me have struggled to study Konkomba sacrifices as tripartite rites of passage, but while searching for a formal sacred blueprint of such performances, they failed to do justice to their actual observations about joking, discussion and insults as the driving force in these performances (Tait 1955a; Zimón 1989: 454).

even his closest relatives) could hear whether he was asking for a posh car or cursing somebody. After the whispering, he took some beer in his mouth and spit three times on the shrines. Then he got a white chick, removed three feathers and sacrificed it. He threw the fowl away and it landed on its back, sign of reception. He then got a black goat and hit it three times on its head with a stick, cut its throat, after which a son of his threw the goat over his shoulder, because ‘that’s what we do with witches’. Nyeuma removed the beard and part of the ear of the goat and put it on the blood-soaked *tigari*. His children instantly roasted the meat in the yard. After the ceremony he went to other houses to do sacrifices they had requested.

A detailed study of Zimón (1989) of a *ndipòndaan* ceremony in a village near Saboba displayed a striking similarity when it came to the sacrifices to ancestors and twins, but our observations differed in terms of the clay pots and anti-witchcraft shrines. Zimón did not observe the latter in Kikpakpaan and instead of sacrificing to clay pots with sand from the ‘home’ earth shrine, the participants in the Zimón’s version entered the earth shrine itself.

Note that in the entire description above, there has been no reference to the Chamba earth spirits, even though the harvest was drawn from the lands of Chamba. Instead, Nyeuma put a pot with sand dug from the earth shrine at ‘home’ in the yard and, sacrificing to it twice and pouring a water promise once, he and his relatives made all sorts of requests which were rarely connected to the earth fertility but rather to the patrimonial care. Strikingly, Nyeuma found the clay pot a legitimate way of invoking this earth spirit because, as he (and other interlocutors) later told me, their sacrifices were requests and promises, while the appeasement of the earth spirit (after breaking taboos) has to be done in the shrine at ‘home’ in Kikpakpaan. In such cases however, as I was told, Konkomba in Chamba may bring their clay pots to the path outside the compound, symbolising the journey home, and sacrifice there until they have the opportunity to go ‘home’ (which can take years).<sup>7</sup>

Whence the ritual importance of an economically marginal crop like sorghum? Sorghum beer comes close to symbolising Konkomba. In fact, beer is the most prominent produce of sorghum. Many Nanumba like the beer brewed by Konkomba women, because the Islamic taboo on alcohol has virtually eradicated Nanumba beer-brewing.<sup>8</sup> As in most societies of the Volta Basin, brewing beer is an exclusively female practice (cf. Luning 2002: 136). Women within a family would brew beer for specific ceremonies such as funerals or the beer festival. It is

<sup>7</sup> Piot (1999: 109) observed similar roadside offerings of off-married Kabré women in northern Togo.

<sup>8</sup> Sorghum porridge is losing popularity in Nanun, because as sorghum kernels are hard, they require days of welding, so giving them a much more pronounced taste than corn. Increasingly, Konkomba and Nanumba women in Chamba cook corn porridge and, as seen in chapter four, Konkomba in Chamba have a taste for the porridge sold by Nanumba women opposite the mosque.

however no exception to see Konkomba in Chamba purchasing beer from bars for libation.

Almost all beer bars in Chamba are run by divorced women (with a striking prevalence of women from the Bigbem clan). After running away from their husbands, they started a bar to make their own living. Men know that they should not 'joke' with these robust women. Although some bars make good business, especially on market days, opening a beer bar remains a career move for outcasts, contrary to bars selling bottled beverages which are usually managed by male entrepreneurs. Such bars usually have plastic tables and chairs rather than the simple wooden benches positioned in a large square in beer bars. In beer bars, no word remains unheard in the communal conversations, usually with rejoinders from the bar owners. In bars selling bottled beer, however, conversations are confined to the various plastic tables and are usually drowned by the deafening music from the loud-speakers.

According to most Konkomba, few things come closer to symbolising their ethnic identity than sitting in a beer bar chatting time away while sipping from cheap and voluminous calabashes of sorghum beer. For them, this scenario symbolises a 'simple' lifestyle, one which colonial administrators both admired and feared (blaming Konkomba feuds on the excessive intake of beer). Time and again, as I sat in a beer bar enjoying a calabash or two, my companions, be they a yam farmer in Chamba or the president of the Konkomba Youth Association in a Saboba bar, said 'Now you see our traditions'. The latter told me in 2005 about KOYA intentions to organise an annual sorghum thanksgiving as ethnic homecoming festival in Saboba.

Similar ideas came from the Roman Catholic Church. Contrary to the Evangelical Presbyterian and Assemblies of God congregations, which are significant in Kikpakpaan but marginal in Nanun, the omnipresent Roman Catholic missions both in Kikpakpaan and Nanun encouraged sorghum beer consumption at so-called '*pito parties*'. Moreover, Roman Catholic priests have been promoting the celebration of a Christianised sorghum festival. In August 2005, I participated in the inauguration party of a Konkomba priest in Saboba. After an exuberant mass full of 'traditional' Konkomba round-dances and in the presence of a handful of KOYA founders, the priest Cudjoe, in a public meeting in a Catholic school, offered the first copy of his graduation thesis on Konkomba ethnicity and religion to the KOYA founding father Daniel Ngula. In this thesis, Cudjoe argued that Konkomba should be 'one people', because 'then we can force ahead'. He therefore proposed the organisation of an annual ethnic homecoming festival in Saboba during sorghum thanksgiving.

The ethnic homecoming dimension of sorghum thanksgiving emerged from my interviews with Konkomba in Chamba, such as Nyeuma, too. Although very

few Konkomba in Chamba actually went to Kikpakpaan for this celebration, many felt that they should go home, at least once every three or four years, to introduce their children to the 'real' thanksgiving and the Konkomba traditional homeland.

Konkomba in Chamba imagined the Oti swamps as their homeland, which they called 'Chabob' (Saboba), *linampal* (home), or Kikpakpaan ('Konkomba land'). In 1985, KOYA wrote that 'All these Konkombas outside our traditional homeland look to Saboba as their Jerusalem'.<sup>9</sup> However, not only was this Jerusalem chosen rather arbitrarily as Konkomba centre by British administrators but with Konkomba ethnicity largely a product of colonial administrators, anthropologists, linguists and missionaries, the idea of an ethnic homeland was not much older.

Konkomba in Kikpakpaan however claim moral authority over their relatives in Nanun. The fascinating change here is that the Konkomba Youth Association claim this moral authority and not elders, many of whom actually reside in Nanun. But do Konkomba look at Saboba as their Jerusalem? Tait expected the links between Konkomba migrants and Konkomba in Kikpakpaan to be broken within years, but in 1947, assisting district commissioner Anderson noticed a remarkable 'solidarity' of Diaspora Konkomba with their kinsmen at home. Currently, almost every Konkomba I spoke in Nanun considered Kikpakpaan as his or her home. It is plausible that the links between Konkomba in Nanun and Kikpakpaan have even become stronger now, due to infrastructural and communication technologies developments but especially resulting from increased ethnic awareness.

Trade, funerals and sorghum thanksgiving are the main channels for these relationships. On the eve of Saboba market, dozens of buses depart from Chamba and other large Konkomba places, overloaded with yams, bringing back fowls and goats from Saboba which is a centre for animal husbandry. Konkomba musicians travel from place to place to launch their cassettes. Konkomba in Nanun generally also consider 'Saboba' as their 'traditional' homeland, even if many rituals I observed in Nanun appear to be much more 'traditional' than those performed in Kikpakpaan. However, although Konkomba in Nanun considered Kikpakpaan their home, many of them feared going there, because of the perils of witchcraft accusations. Below, I study these accusations, which are expressed in the realm of yam cultivation, in more detail. In order to understand the peculiarity of the link between yams and Konkomba witchcraft I however first describe the symbolic value of yam harvesting for Nanumba.

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<sup>9</sup> Wujangi, Kenneth (KOYA) to The Secretary for Local Government (08-05-1985) 'Projected Saboba/Chereponi District Council'.

## Nanumba, yams and hospitality

Nanumba typically found Konkomba lifestyle immature and (socially and ecologically) destructive. While many Nanumba farmers in Chamba also have remote farms, none of them would spend the night there. A persistent Nanumba stereotype is that Konkomba would sell their yams, even at the risk of starving their children, and then waste their profits on beer. The core of this point of view is that Konkomba farmers in Nanun have to use their yam money to buy a proper meal from Nanumba women. This stereotype gains relevance from the fact that in Chamba, most bar owners are Konkomba while most food sellers are Nanumba.

Before proceeding with these stereotypes, let's briefly look at Nanumba self-identification, in which yams are a crucial symbol. While Nanumba self-identification also draws on the production of yams, and most Nanumba depend on selling their yams as much as Konkomba do, I never heard Nanumba say that they 'feed Ghana'. Nanumba I interviewed on this issue said that they would eat first and sell their surplus yams to those Accra urbanites or Asante cocoa farmers who failed to look after their own meals. Many Nanumba in my research took great pride in their *fufu* (a staple of mashed yams), claiming that their wives know how to cook and pound the best *fufu*, without adding plantains (as is done in the south of the country). The dominant Nanumba self-image does not only structure most narratives of Konkomba settlement in Nanun ('we gave them food to eat and yam seedlings to plant') but it also symbolises the basis of Nanumba social organisation between chiefs and earth priests. Chiefs tend to call the local earth priests their wives who 'cook' (sacrifice) for them. Several earth priests summarised the settlement of chiefs in Nanun as a quest for food: 'We gave them food to eat'. This complex local relationship between chiefs and earth priests is not complementary but they are rather entangled in a Gordian knot. This explains why settlers such as Konkomba cannot be earth priests, because it would imply that chiefs had to humble themselves to strangers.

A dramatic manifestation of the hospitality theme was the September 2002 ritualised consumption of first *fufu* by Jilo earth priest Wumbei who was also the supreme Nanumba warrior chief. After a night of communal dancing, Wumbei sacrificed six roosters onto the stool which symbolises the warrior class, after which elder women from his lineage jointly cooked and pounded the yams to *fufu* in the yard. Like with sorghum beer, ritualization here corresponded with a crop transformation, i.e. from yams to *fufu*. It was only later (the ceremony happened during my first weeks in Nanun) that I learnt the exceptional character of this ceremony, and that various family elders had performed their own sacrifices the previous night, while I was dancing. The ceremony (*nuli dibu*, yam eating) I heard of was celebrated in the yard of the family elder at night and involved the

sacrifice of a fowl to ancestors. Sacrifices in the elders' compound yard may also be to twins, represented by pots or occasionally wooden dolls.

### Konkomba, yams and witchcraft

Konkomba yam harvesting does not seem to produce a communal feeling of home in Nanun. Generalizing a bit, Konkomba yam thanksgiving resonates with hard work and wealth creation rather than with hospitality and it is rather shrouded in jealousy and fear. This is precisely the realm of witchcraft accusations. In spite of its name, Konkomba do not dominate trade to and in the Konkomba Yam Market. Increasingly, educated Konkomba in Nanun stress the negative side of Konkomba feeding Ghana, namely the 'enslavement' of yam farmers by traders (usually Asante middle-women) and southern consumers. This market is a stage for Konkomba self-reflection. My interlocutors did not blame their 'enslavement' in the yam economy on the Accra traders or clientele but on their own naïve 'simple lifestyle'.

The dominant Konkomba lifestyle in Chamba is that of yam farmers who, with their families, work on their farms near the Sofeya forest reserve fifteen kilometres from town and sleep in their unequipped farm huts all week except Friday when they enjoy the market and lots of alcohol. My material suggests a very widespread move away from the ethos of naive hard farm work towards education. So, Konkomba self-identification as people who like hard work and drinking beer has a shadow reality of being cheated. Many Konkomba I spoke to wished for their children a different future. Symbolically, these expectations bring along drinking something different from simple sorghum beer.

Drinking sorghum beer is opposed to drinking gin (cheap but intoxicating), sodas (dull and childish) but especially to Guinness, the most expensive beverage available in Nanun (per bottle five times the price of a calabash of sorghum beer). Drinking Guinness requires a certain level of wealth but it offers the prestige of financial success and the appreciation of international quality, even though a Guinness brewery in Kumasi serves the Ghanaian market. But many Konkomba in Chamba suspected that consumers of Guinness derived their wealth from this stout, as if it were a concoction. The brand's slogan 'Guinness the power' is known in all corners of the country and its richness in calories is eclipsed by allusions to virility. In Chamba, the slogan also alludes to occult powers; many consumers of this stout were owners of anti-witchcraft shrines.

This stout symbolises the aspirations of many Konkomba, wealth creation, but it also stands for the jealousy, fear and suspicion which find a way out in witchcraft accusations and which are tearing many families and communities apart. Witchcraft accusations seem to thrive in the ambiguous intimacy of families, especially those relatives living elsewhere, beyond observation (Geschiere 1997;

Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 1998). Many Konkomba communities were ravaged by witchcraft accusations. Just south of Chamba, in the homogeneous village of Bondaando, accusations and counteraccusations resulted in two suicides and a dozen households fleeing to Chamba (Labré 2004).

Although few interlocutors overtly spoke about this, many Konkomba in Chamba feared going ‘home’ to Kikpakpaan to celebrate the presumably unifying beer festival, because of witchcraft accusations. In the beer festival described above, the most expensive sacrifice (a goat) was offered to anti-witchcraft shrines. Much as sorghum beer may symbolise Konkomba unity, it also symbolises their divisions. It is widely accepted that most people are poisoned through sorghum beer and no one would ever drink from a calabash which has been filled without seeing it or which has been offered by someone who keeps his or her thumb in the beer. One of my interlocutors (a Roman Catholic) stopped drinking beer for months after he heard rumours that someone wanted to poison him. To be safe from poison, my interlocutor decided to only drink bottled beer (which had to be opened in his presence).

Witchcraft accusations and protective measures are expressed during sooth-saying at funerals, as seen in the suicide case. However, protection from witchcraft appears to be tied up with the yam harvest as well. Many Konkomba in Nanun, mostly young men, ritualised the yam harvest, either by offering some tubers to the pastor or priest in church service or by sacrificing to *tigari* or related anti-witchcraft cults at the ‘church’ (*asòre*). Anti-witchcraft shrines, such as *tigari*, *grumadi* and *kupo* (henceforth collectively addressed as *tigari*), are usually attributes in clay from Central Ghana or Togo which became popular in the North during the economic crises of the 1970s.<sup>10</sup> While elders were privileged to ‘medicine’ (NAN *tiim*; LIK *nnyok*), *tigari* were available to the youth. Although the district administration certified some *tigari*-owners as ‘traditional healers’ (and taxed their income), it was a public secret that some of them used their shrines to ward off witchcraft and avenge their enemies.

Sacrificing to anti-witchcraft shrines during yam thanksgiving is a typical Konkomba phenomenon in Nanun. There were therefore no interethnic witchcraft accusations in Nanun, even though a series of absences of Nanumba children and women around Dakpam in the 1960s led to wild speculations that

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<sup>10</sup> *Tigari* and similar cults emerged when economic crises on the cocoa plantations in the Gold Coast and Ashanti colonies in the 1930s triggered witchcraft accusations (Field 1940; Gray 2005; Parker 2006). Northerner labourers seemed not to fear witchcraft, because they were not familiar with the phenomenon (Field 1940), but many southern labourers instead turned to northern earth shrines, such as those of the Tallensi Tongo Hills. From the 1960s onwards, Northerners visiting the south for trade or education, took these transformed cults back to the north (Kirby 1986: 63, f.n.). Witchcraft accusations were far from alien in the northern villages (Cardinall 1918: 61; cf. Tait 1954c: 74), but Ghana’s collapsing economy coupled with exorbitant yam benefits for some farmers greatly exacerbated such accusations in the 1970s.

Konkomba had abducted them to perform sacrifices to their *tigari* cults. Many middle-aged Nanumba in Dakpam remembered that they were not allowed to walk to school alone during that time. These speculations exacerbated the widespread Nanumba portrayal of Konkomba as savages and resulted in a public Nanumba rejection of *tigari* (even though many visited them in secret).

Nanumba considered witchcraft a typical Konkomba problem. However, as seen in chapter three, witchcraft accusations destroyed the safety of many refugees in Bimbilla. Nanumba however retain the idea that while witchcraft spreads unabated among Konkomba, it can be controlled by the chief Lanjiri Naa at the village shrine of Kukuo, east of Bimbilla (cf. Geschiere 1997: 66-68, for a similar distinction for Maka and Bamilike). For at least a century, Kukuo has had a community of old women accused of witchcraft, popularly known in Ghana as one of four ‘witch camps’ in the country’s north-east (cf. Kirby 2006). Its earth spirit is renowned for its capacity to neutralise witchcraft (Amherst 1931b: 33). When I did research in Kukuo in 2002, there were almost 300 women in the camp (but none were Konkomba). After the healing ceremony, the women could return home but most of them stay on in Kukuo because they were banished by their communities. The suffering of these women is immense and has attracted international attention through Berg’s documentary ‘Witches in exile’ (2005), but most Nanumba euphemistically called the camp a traditional nursing home.

This perception is coherent with the Nanumba notion that the intra-Konkomba proliferation of witchcraft accusations is a manifestation of their lack of social organisation and lack of respect for the Nanumba social order; many Nanumba told me that Konkomba ‘witches’ would have to be sent to Kukuo for healing. Moreover, for many Nanumba, Konkomba yam cultivation, witchcraft accusations and Guinness consumption are all manifestations of the greed and exploitation of the stereotypical Konkomba.

## Conclusion

The suicide case showed that the struggle over earth sacrifices was discursive, belonging to the conflict and displacement context of 1994-1995, rather than empirical: The actual performance of earth sacrifices was much less tense than their non-performance. As described, I found the theme of earth sacrifices in Nanun to be shrouded in very persistent mutual stereotypes and prejudices about greed; Nanumba thoughts that Konkomba have an excessive and destructive lifestyle full of violence, consumption, witchcraft and land depletion versus Konkomba ideas that Nanumba are lazy, irresponsible and yet arrogant landowners. These ideas were developed in a context of general decline of traditional ‘duties and obligations’.

The suicide and beer festival cases showed the dynamics and mobility of Konkomba shrines; most lineage and ancestral shrines appear to move along with migrants so that only earth shrines link them to Kikpakpaan. Earth shrines and the sorghum thanksgiving have been increasingly central to Konkomba ethnic awareness and the construction of Kikpakpaan as a Konkomba homeland. However, most Konkomba migrant communities had pots with sand dug from these shrines, to which they turned for blessings, while ceremonies for the protection from witchcraft appeared to eclipse the earth shrine performances. The Nanun earth spirits were strikingly absent in this Konkomba constellation of blessing and protection but nevertheless, most Konkomba farmers felt heavily dependent on the fertility of the earth they worked on.

While earth shrines may symbolize Nanumba autochthony, many Nanumba considered such shrines the locus of a relationship between Nanun society and the local natural forces, mediated by earth priests. As such, earth shrines stand for the fragmentation of Nanumba society in localized communities and their reliance on the goodwill of the earth spirits, which most Nanumba feared more than the presumed Konkomba political agenda of conquering the privilege of earth sacrifices.

Earth sacrifices are not in the realm of rights or entitlements; it is no coincidence that the clause contained a prohibition. As such, this issue slid into the realm of stereotypes and prejudices, leaving judgment to the spirits. During my fieldwork I found that Nanumba considered a Konkomba political plot to seize the autochthony in Nanun impossible. Sovereign earth spirits would not allow such attempts and I heard several Nanumba earth priests say that ‘They won’t get what they came for’. Schmitt argued in *Political Theology* that all significant political concepts are secularized theological concepts; ‘[t]he exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology’ (Schmitt 1921: 36). In other words, sovereignty is originally a theological construct, which has been appropriated and secularized in the political sphere (cf. De Vries *et al* 2006). The Nanun case however clearly shows the strength of the alternative, non-political, sovereignty of the earth spirits. Consequently, while Konkomba and Nanumba relationships may be imbued with stereotypes, they are devoid of spiritual accusations, and for that matter also of anti-Christianity or anti-Islam rhetoric. This would require more research.

What seemed to unconsciously bind Konkomba and Nanumba was not only hot potato. As I showed for Chamba, while Konkomba generally recognized Tindana Fuseini as the exclusive custodian to the earth shrines in town, they were usually very critical of the way in which he exercised, or rather failed to exercise, the duties which came along with his position. The earth priest himself was uneasy with his position: He had never set foot in Chamba until a soothsayer re-

vealed his duty in 2000, making him one of the last settlers in town (see chapter four). Like many other Nanumba earth priests, he withdrew himself from the public sphere as much as possible, leaving decisions about sacrifices to the chief and to soothsayers. As described in this chapter, many Konkomba criticized the earth priest for forsaking his responsibility. In sum, not the performance but discourses of the non-performance of earth sacrifices seem to have the capacity to generate suspicions between Konkomba and Nanumba.

## The power of decision: The Chamba dispute

*'Konkombas shall be allowed to freely choose their headmen to be blessed by the Bimbilla-Naa or his delegated divisional authority provided this will not conflict with the interest of the Bimbilla-Naa and/or the Princes of Nanun' (clause 2).*

### Introduction

Who has the final say when a Konkomba free choice of headman conflicts with the interest of a Nanumba chief, phrased in clause two?<sup>1</sup> This chapter is about the Chamba chieftaincy dispute, in the context of Chamba's intricate demographic constitution of an overwhelming Konkomba majority and a Nanumba minority centred around the chief. This chapter brings most themes in this book into play but it is essentially about the sovereignty or the power of decision of that chief of Chamba. The case illustrates that against the spirit of the Kumasi Accord, Konkomba and Nanumba did not openly discuss the conflict issues between them but rather closed their ranks behind the legalistic speeches and petitions of ethnic Youth Associations or Students Unions. Many interlocutors considered the Chamba dispute, which was the largest of similar cases around Nanun, to be a litmus test for the 1996 Kumasi Accord.

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<sup>1</sup> This clause was the consequence of clause eleven, which stipulated that Konkomba would consult Nanumba for finding a 'satisfactory' solution for the Konkomba 'self-styled chiefs and separatists'.

A better understanding of the events requires posing several questions: Why is the choice of a Konkomba headman so problematic in Chamba? Why do Konkomba headman have to be in the interest of Nanumba chiefs? What is the semantic difference between headman and chief in a Ghanaian context and what does blessing mean? Why did this town dispute escalate to an ethnic level in 2002 and in 2006/2007? Why didn't the local leaders sit together to clear the dispute up? But especially, why didn't the tensions produce violence?

The structure of this chapter is as follows: After a chronology of the dispute from its start in 1996 until its first escalation in 2002, I make two side-steps: Contextualizing Konkomba free choice of headmen in the wider controversies of Konkomba leadership in Nanun and second, studying the impact of a simultaneous intra-Nanumba dispute concerning eligible succession to the paramount chieftaincy of Bimbilla. As such, it addresses clause six of the peace accord, which stipulated that 'Paramountcy is the preserve of eligible Nanumbas'. The succession dispute showed not only that such eligibility is highly contested among Nanumba, but also that the case led to a virtual standstill of chieftaincy in Nanun: Because without a paramount chief, no new chiefs can be installed, almost half of the Nanumba chieftaincies was vacant by 2007. Although Konkomba tried to stand aloof from this case, they increasingly rejected the moral authority of Nanumba chiefs and mocked their 'interests'.

After analysing these contexts, we return to the chronology of the Chamba case, from 2002 until the new escalation and de-escalation in 2006 and 2007. In order to draw conclusions on the relationship between threats of violence, silence and legalistic discourses, my analysis will focus on the presentation of spokesmen claiming the authority to write or speech on behalf of Konkomba or Nanumba and both the content and form of their authoritative presentation; security interventions and the exercise of the power of decision in the case.

Before beginning to study the Chamba events, it is important to recall that by emphasizing the stability inherent in Ghanaian chieftaincy as a framework for peace in Nanun, Assefa seemed to ignore that Ghana has lived through countless chieftaincy disputes from time immemorial and that this nation is haunted by the dilemma whether or not the state should intervene in these disputes (see chapter one). As the state delegated its sovereignty in chieftaincy affairs to the National and Regional Houses of Chiefs in the Second, Third and Fourth Republics (1969-1971, 1979-1981, 1992-), the country has also been haunted by conspiracy theories that 'traditional rule' is being politicised. These tensions were most tangible in the dramatic events of March 2002, when Dagomba paramount Ya Na Andani was assassinated by local opponents in his Yendi palace with forty of his entourage. This so-called 'Dagbon crisis', which I hope to analyse elsewhere,

shook the nation, had been decades in the coming and at completion of this book, it was still unresolved.<sup>2</sup>

### The Chamba dispute (1996-2002)

Although the number of actors may be dazzling, three persons initially stand out in the dispute: Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan (the Nanumba chief) and the two Konkomba contestants: Nyilyar (the son of former Konkomba headman Bijiba) and Biligban (the former district ‘chief farmer’). Below, I describe the chronology of the case up to late 2002, when I left the field for over two years. These years coincided with a lull in the case until early 2005, when I was back in the field.

Although the dispute emerged in 1996, the story of Chamba headmen actually started in 1979, when the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) told their local activists in Nanun to choose their own leaders. Biyenjin, an industrious farmer – the district ‘chief farmer’<sup>3</sup> in the mid 1970s – and the local KOYA activist organised a meeting in Chamba about leadership, but he refused leadership himself because he was also a trader and hence often away. He therefore went to Fiindi, the first Konkomba settler in town and whom he considered to have the privilege of leadership. Fiindi also refused the offer, because of his old age, but he forwarded the request to his clan-mate Bijiba, who had previously been a community leader elsewhere. So it happened and Bijiba became the Konkomba headman for Chamba.

Throughout 1980, concomitant with the tensions in Bimbilla between the Bimbilla Naa and the self-declared Konkomba leader Ali (see chapter two), the local Nanumba chief in Chamba called Bijiba to step down, until the 1981 violence broke out. The Nanumba community in Chamba fled to Bimbilla and when some of them returned, they brought a new chief, Chamba Naa Yakubu, who feared the Konkomba in town and tolerated Bijiba’s position as *Kpung-kpaam kpema* (Konkomba elder). Note that Nanumba have consistently called the Konkomba leader for Chamba ‘headman’ (*kpema*, literally elder), while Konkomba called them ‘chief’ (*ubòr*). This semantic difference is important because while for Nanumba, only chiefs have spiritual powers which they receive during their ‘enskinment’ ceremony (chiefs sit on animal skins instead of thrones).

<sup>2</sup> The Dagbon events had profound repercussions for Konkomba and Nanumba. Some Konkomba used the crisis to try and get rid of their stereotype as northern aggressors, but many also feared becoming a scapegoat for internal Dagomba divisions. Some Konkomba intellectuals saw the crisis as a dangerous precedence and argued that Konkomba better stay far away from chieftaincy, but most other Konkomba interpreted the Dagbon crisis as a hindrance to the paramount chieftaincy for the Konkomba homeland which was promised to them in the Kumasi agreements. In the slipstream of the Dagbon crisis, a lingering intra-Nanumba chieftaincy escalated (see below).

<sup>3</sup> A government honour to stimulate agriculture which, although awarded annually, offers a lifelong societal status in Nanun.

When Bijiba died on 28 April 1996, his eldest son Nyilyar acted on his father's behalf until the funeral was performed; his experience and young age made him popular. By then, there were no Nanumba in town, since all were displaced by the 1994-1995 violence. But when Nyilyar performed the funeral of his father two years later (in May 1998), some Nanumba had returned and there was also a new Nanumba chief (Salifu Alhassan). This chief announced to Nyilyar that he wanted to formally 'enskin' a Konkomba leader as his sub-chief (rather than install a headman), as a medium between him and the Konkomba communities in town. Nyilyar said that he was not interested in such a title and that he wanted to become a farmer after the funeral was over.

Two men were however very much interested in claiming the title. This was significant because in 1981, no-one had volunteered for it and it suggests that Konkomba in Nanun took a greater interest in chieftaincy in 1998 than two decades earlier. Both contestants claimed to represent the late 'chief farmer' Biyenjin, who had performed an important advisory role to Bijiba. After the 1994 death of Biyenjin, Bijiba had invited Biligban, who had been the annual local government elected 'best farmer' in 1989, from a hamlet west of Chamba, to replace Biyenjin. This did not however go well with Biyenjin's family. Biyenjin's eldest 'son' (in fact his nephew Nmayaan) also claimed the title. At the funeral, Nyilyar gave ambiguous signals about his loyalties, allowing Nmayaan to pay the gravediggers but accepting Biligban's cow for slaughter.

Immediately after his father's funeral, Nyilyar organised a council of elders from the main Konkomba communities in town and informed them about his father's last words. Both Nmayaan and Biligban hoped that their names would fall, but surprisingly, Bijiba's last wish was that Konkomba leadership in Chamba was granted to the family of the first Konkomba settler in Chamba (Fiindi). Fiindi had died, but his eldest son (Nmabini) was present at the meeting and he said that although he was grateful for the offer, he was also unprepared. He therefore asked Nyilyar to become the leader himself, so that he could learn from him. The council of elders supported Nyilyar's candidacy and Nyilyar, who had preferred to be a farmer, agreed. The elders and Nyilyar visited the Chamba chief that day and he said that he recognized Nyilyar as the Konkomba elder.

However, Biligban complained to Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan that a son cannot succeed his father as a chief. Chamba Naa agreed on this but he was afraid to meddle in these Konkomba affairs and he sent Biligban away to find an amicable solution. In reality, the chief had a preference for Biligban because the latter, as a successful yam farmer, provided the chief with significant sums of honorary and voluntary tribute. While Biligban and Biyenjin's son accepted the mediation from the Konkomba community chief of Accra where the latter

stepped back for Biligban's seniority, the ambivalence between Biligban and Nyilyar remained.

In 1999, tensions rose to such an extent that the District Security Council (DISEC) suspended the installation of a Konkomba chief in Chamba.<sup>4</sup> This shows that although the government of Ghana had delegated its power of decision in chieftaincy affairs to what it considered the traditional authorities, it held on to its sovereignty in maintaining security or the monopoly of violence. So although governments in Ghana could not make a decision in the Chamba dispute, they did have the legal power to freeze traditional installations for security reasons.

DISEC comprised four main actors: The District Chief Executive and the District Superintendent of Police (DSP) were the faces and voices of DISEC, while the officer of the Bureau of National Investigation (BNI) and the Commander of the Armed Forces and their chairman were mostly silent in public. The BNI officer was covertly gathering his information and the Army Commander was also silent in public, for he could not intervene without DCE and DSP invitation and without permission from his regional superiors in Tamale. On numerous occasions I have heard police officers quenching a problem by giving warnings that 'You don't want me to call the soldiers', exemplifying the distinction between state law-preserving violence in the police and military law-making violence described in chapter one.

The Nanumba Traditional Council (NTC, the chief's office), more precisely the Nanumba paramount chief Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II, supported Biligban (whom he had known as a farmer). After the Bimbilla Naa's death in 1999, his acting son continued the support for Biligban. The Chamba Naa was under stress: Biligban followed all the procedures for becoming a sub-chief and paid him well with yam money, but denying the popular Konkomba support for Nyilyar, including that of Fiindi's family, could be a dangerous decision for him personally and the small Nanumba community in Chamba.

There was a status quo for two years, until on 5 May 2001, DISEC came to Chamba to push Nyilyar and Biligban for finding an amicable solution.<sup>5</sup> Nyilyar thereupon organised a meeting of family elders on 12 May, similar to the council of elders he had organised following his father's funeral in 1998, at which, in the absence of Biligban, he was once again elected.<sup>6</sup> Nyilyar presented himself to the Chamba Naa who, overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of elders, accepted

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<sup>4</sup> NDA/P/28/Vol.2/10 District Chief Executive to The Police Sector Commander (29-01-2000) 'Re-Suspension of Choice of Konkomba Leader at Chamba'.

<sup>5</sup> NDA/P/28/Vol.2/14 Youth Chairman Targal Beyi to Chamba-Naa Salifu Alhassan (06-05-2001) 'An Invitation'.

<sup>6</sup> NDA/P/28/Vol.2/16 Youth Chairman Tagar Biyi (13-05-2001) 'Information on Konkomba Chieftaincy Affairs at Chamba'.

Nyilyar's election. Biligban immediately called the help of a Konkomba lawyer based in southern Ghana and three days later, he summoned Nyilyar to the Nanumba Traditional Council (popularly called *kòtini*, court),<sup>7</sup> since chieftaincy matters cannot be handled by civil courts. Biligban was illiterate but in a statement of claim bearing his thumbprint, he claimed that Nyilyar's election was illegal, untraditional and dangerous because it was done 'without the approval and blessings of the Chamba Naa the lawful representative of the Bimbilla Naa'.

After Nyilyar, who was also illiterate, gave a written statement of defence to the Council, written by his cousin, with thumbprints of most clan elders in Chamba,<sup>8</sup> the Council installed a Judicial Committee of three chiefs, all but one illiterate as well. This intra-Konkomba dispute became eclipsed by Nanumba divisions: The Committee never reached a conclusion, because its chairman died early 2002 and his death led to an escalation of a serious intra-Nanumba dispute in Bimbilla (see below).

In the meantime however, popular support of Nyilyar in Chamba became ever more obvious. The local Konkomba Youth Association Chairman, a middle-aged man who had been selected by the youth leaders of the various clan communities as their representative, teamed up behind Nyilyar and so did the Chamba delegate District Assembly member. Third, the Assembly member and several other opinion leaders were devout Roman Catholics and the local priest made it no secret that he supported Nyilyar.

Popular support notwithstanding, however, Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan forced a breakthrough in the stalemate, an intervention disadvantageous for Nyilyar. In August, heavily pressurised by the Bimbilla regent and the Traditional Council, he installed Biligban. The chief was also illiterate but later explained in a petition to the Regional Minister that '[t]he new headman for Chamba only needed my blessings as the traditional ruler and custodian of the land in the area, and which I needed to do in a very peaceful atmosphere'.<sup>9</sup> On Saturday morning 31 August 2002, in the presence of Bimbilla elders, Chamba Naa performed Biligban's ritual enskinment. The installation happened while two armoured cars patrolled Chamba for the chief's safety.

Nevertheless, a troop of young Konkomba with sticks and guns headed from Nyilyar's place to the Chamba Naa palace. Nyilyar anxiously walked through town, afraid of what was going to happen. Simultaneously, an opponent group

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<sup>7</sup> 'Chieftaincy Act. 1971 (Act 370) Writ to Initiate Chieftaincy Proceedings in the Judicial Committee of Nanumba Traditional Council, Bimbilla: Statement of Claim' (15-05-2001); 'Chieftaincy Act. 1971 (Act 370) Writ to Initiate Chieftaincy Proceedings in the Judicial Committee of Nanumba Traditional Council, Bimbilla' (15-05-2001).

<sup>8</sup> Iyaar to NTC (29-05-2001) 'Statement of Defence'.

<sup>9</sup> NDA/P/28/Vol.2/22 Chamba-Naa Salifu Alhassan to The Regional Minister (15-10-2002) 'Chamba Konkomba Community Situational Report (31st August) – A Rejoinder'.

was ready to depart from the Biyenjin family (Kanjooktiib community). The small Nanumba community also prepared to defend the Chamba Naa. It was mainly because of the authority of the Youth Chairman and the District Assembly member that fighting was averted.

That very week, Youth Chairman Tagal Beyi, who was illiterate, reported the events to the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA),<sup>10</sup> which sent a delegation to Chamba to investigate the issue. After that, the KOYA senior Wujangi gave a press conference in Saboba, referring to clause two of the Kumasi Accord and interpreting it in the framework of citizenship rights:

‘KOYA is against imposition of leaders of any kind at any level on our members. KOYA believes in democratic [tenets], and as such we cherish a situation whereby our members freely choose their leaders as Ghanaians’.<sup>11</sup>

From here, the local case was rapidly brought to an ethnic level. On 16 September, KOYA wrote a memo on the Chamba issue, accusing the Nanumba Traditional Council of ‘divide and rule tactics’ and of enforcing a chief on the Konkomba community by force.<sup>12</sup> Three weeks later, the Nanumba Youth Association (NAYA) responded to KOYA, firmly rejecting the critique on the undemocratic Nanumba enskinment customs, also by adhering clause two, albeit through a different lens:<sup>13</sup>

‘Against this background it would indeed be very unfortunate for KOYA to interpret this to mean that Konkombas can just pick a leader bring him to a Nanumba traditional ruler and sort of command him to give his blessings without due regard to the normal and established channels or procedures Nanumbas equally go through to seek titles from our overloads [sic].’

The Nanumba petitioners added that they would ‘not compromise with the novelty KOYA wants to introduce into the traditions and customs of Nanung’ and embedded their legal position in a moral stance that their ‘hospitality is being taken for granted’ and they even suspected ‘a secret agenda by Konkombas to annex Nanumba land and make it a tributary state to Saboba’.

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<sup>10</sup> Yaw Waja Peter (General Secretary KOYA) to The Regional Minister (16-09-2002) ‘Simmering Tension between Two Konkomba Factions at Chamba in the Nanumba District’. The KOYA delegation was made up of the Saboba District Chief Executive Charles Bintin, the chief of Nnaalòk village in Kikpakpaan (Unalorbòr Yamba Yajool) and several KOYA executives.

<sup>11</sup> Wujangi, Kenneth (KOYA) (2002) ‘Speech of the National President of the KOYA at a Meeting of Konkomba Chiefs on Sunday 8th September, 2002 in Saboba’.

<sup>12</sup> Beyi, Tagal (Youth Chairman) to The Regional Minister (31-08-2002) ‘Chamba Konkomba Community Situational Report’; On 20 September, the Chamba assembly member John Kidisil wrote to the DCE for intervention; NDA/P/28/Vol.2/21 Assemblyman John L. Kidisil to The District Chief Executive (20-09-2002) ‘Report from Chamba’.

<sup>13</sup> Mohammed Yahaya A. (General Secretary NAYA) to The President KOYA (06-10-2002) ‘Protest against KOYA Activities in Nanung’.

The tone of both letters was inflammatory and it engendered heated local petitioning, e.g. of the illiterate Chamba chief and youth chairman.<sup>14</sup> As in the aftermath of the 1994 violence, legalistic petitioning was the main form of communication between Konkomba and Nanumba. A dramatic turn for the good came on 5 November 2002 with a KOYA letter to the Regional Security Council (REGSEC), asking for a meeting between KOYA, NAYA and the DISEC representatives of Nanumba and Saboba/Chereponi districts, to solve the issue along the lines of the Kumasi peace accord.<sup>15</sup> NAYA agreed to the meeting,<sup>16</sup> which took place on 17 December 2002 in Tamale.<sup>17</sup> Although no decisions were taken that day, both parties were dedicated to finding a peaceful way out of the Chamba impasse. However, an intra-Nanumba chieftaincy dispute which became very tense in early 2003 (see below) overshadowed the case and no further meetings were scheduled. This status quo lasted for over two years, until early 2005, when a peace-building programme from the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) gave new impetus to resolving the dispute (see below).

### The context of Konkomba leadership in Nanun

So far, this case has clearly shown how a local case over the succession of a Konkomba leader escalated into a phase of petitioning of youth associations, claiming to represent Konkomba and Nanumba 'ethnic groups' and phrasing suspicions of Nanumba divide and rule tactics or a Konkomba secret agenda to annex the land. Contrary to the performance of earth sacrifices and voting, which were shrouded in prejudices of reluctant landowners or immature voters (see chapters four and five), the case of the recognition of Konkomba headmen in the lower ranks of Nanumba chieftaincy ignited widespread mutual feelings of victimhood based on the violation of their rights as 'Ghanaians' (for Konkomba) or 'custodians of the land' (for Nanumba). It is striking that by claiming these rights, the Youth Associations both referred to the second clause of the Kumasi Agreement!

This situation nearly produced violence, but not quite. Instead, KOYA and NAYA authoritatively claimed to represent their ethnic communities in Chamba and they petitioned the security agencies about the others' illegal activities. Their role illustrates the forms of legalism pictured in chapter one. Both Youth Associations did not ask for a decision from the security agencies DISEC and

<sup>14</sup> NDA/P/28/Vol.2/22 Chamba-Naa Salifu Alhassan to The Regional Minister (15-10-2002) 'Chamba Konkomba Community Situational Report (31st August) – A Rejoinder'.

<sup>15</sup> NDA/P/28/Vol.2/23 National President Konkomba Youth Association to The Chairman Northern Regional Security Council (REGSEC) (05-11-2002) 'Proposal for a REGSEC Meeting'.

<sup>16</sup> Taher, Dr. H.A. (NAYA) to KOYA (25-11-2002).

<sup>17</sup> Regional Co-ordinating Director to NAYA, KOYA (09-12-2002) 'Summons to Meetings with REGSEC'.

REGSEC but they wanted to formally defend respective the power of decision of the chief or of the Konkomba communities.

Both Associations adhered to clause two of the Kumasi agreements, but rather than offering a solution to the controversy in Chamba, the clause allowed for competing interpretations. The clause stipulated that Konkomba could 'freely choose' their candidate, but who are 'Konkomba'? Nyilyar claimed to be chosen by the elders from the majority of the clan communities in town, but Biligban also claimed to represent Konkomba as the advisor to the previous Konkomba leader. The chief of Chamba said that he had to choose between the two candidates because Konkomba had been incapable, due to their unfamiliarity with chieftaincy, of teaming up behind one candidate. Most Konkomba however blamed their divisions on the chief, who acted in his own 'interests'. In the petitions of the Youth Associations, these local ambiguities were presented as a clash between the communal Konkomba right of free choice of leadership and the chiefly power of decision to recognise the best candidate.

This controversy however essentially revolved around the concept of headmen. Put bluntly, there were no headmen in Nanun chieftaincy, except chiefs, who are ceremonially enskinned, and elders, who are recognised. While the chief of Chamba recognised Nyilyar as an elder twice, which the latter considered sufficient, the chief also enskinned Biligban as a sub-chief. Whereas Nanumba *naam* resonates with notions of power, Konkomba spoke of their chieftaincy as *tibòrtiib aabor*, meaning 'what chiefs do'. For most Konkomba in Chamba, Biligban was not a Konkomba leader but a Nanumba chief and they considered his installation an imposition. The Chamba chief interpreted the general Konkomba rejection of Biligban as a flouting of his generous and voluntary offer to enskin a Konkomba chief.

The Chamba case was not unique; it was the largest of a handful of similar Konkomba leadership disputes, which were all tense, in which one contestant had the popular Konkomba support and aspired to the recognition of the local Nanumba chief and another rallied the Nanumba support for enskinment as a sub-chief. As of 2002, the Nanumba Traditional Council had registered Biligban among four other Konkomba chiefs, who all had requested for such titles themselves and while being popular among Nanumba, they were called 'Nanumba chiefs' by most Konkomba.<sup>18</sup> These divergent appreciations are most tangible in Kanjoo Naa Nachipòòn Mmalbe Immanuel.

This chief was enskinned in 1994 and he is the grandson of Kanjoo Naa Tangam, the first Konkomba chief in Nanun. Tangam settled from Kanjook in French Togoland in northern Nanun, where, for motives unknown to me, the

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<sup>18</sup> These chiefs were Achina Gmaninbu Nagbija (1982) in Nakpa, Damba Naa in Dambado near Chamba in 1990, and Depa Naa Nayemi Bogbela (2000) in Depa near Nakpa.

nearby Nanumba chief of Gambuga recognised him as his sub-chief. In the 1960s, Bimbilla Naa Dasana upgraded Tangam as the chief for all Konkomba in Nanun, similarly to the Ewe and Asante chiefs. While Tangam and his succeeding son continued to live in Kanjoo, Mmalbe moved to the roadside town of Makayili to work as a teacher. For many Nanumba, Mmalbe is one of their favourite chiefs: He is young and bright but also loyal to tradition. However, Konkomba dislike him what Nanumba like for: He is almost a Nanumba and he and his father sided with Nanumba during the violent conflicts. Mmalbe told me that he even feared Konkomba assassination attempts against him.

In sum, the peace clause encapsulated a profound dilemma: While most Konkomba agree to introducing their chosen leaders to the Nanumba chiefs, they do not agree to the decisions of such chiefs about proper Konkomba leadership. But while most Nanumba agree with Konkomba local leadership, many of them object to such candidacy as a fait accompli and support the local chief's power of decision in terms of local leadership.

But although many Konkomba in Nanun do not want their leadership to be 'Nanumba', I found that Konkomba leaders were heavily borrowing from Nanumba or from the national Asante-inspired chieftaincy format. While Biligban was much more explicit in his presentation as a Nanun chief, Nyilyar's palace regulations were implicitly copied from Nanumba as well. This was shown in codes of conduct, e.g. the offering of kola nuts to visitors and elders clapping hands during greeting, and in their entourage, comprising chief's elders who were usually called *bikpanpalb*, an adaption from Nanumba *kpamba* and especially the leading elder (or 'linguist' in Ghana's national terminology) who was usually known as *wunlaan* (from Nanumba *wulana*) or *chaamininkpel* (from Asante *òchaame*).<sup>19</sup> Moreover, I found that in villages where Konkomba and Nanumba lived together, Konkomba tended to call their leaders chiefs, in spite of local Nanumba calling them elders, while in very few homogenous Konkomba settlements, inhabitants called their leaders chiefs (but rather elders or earth priests).<sup>20</sup> In sum, Konkomba 'chieftaincy' in Nanun tends to be (often unintentionally) relational to that of Nanumba.

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<sup>19</sup> Such imitation becomes clear when compared to Kpasa and Damanko, whose 'chiefs' positioned themselves as southern chiefs, sitting on stools instead of skins and wearing cloth instead of smocks.

<sup>20</sup> In all mixed Konkomba/Nanumba villages between Bimbilla and Chamba, Konkomba communities called their leader a 'chief' (*ubòr*), in spite of Nanumba calling them elders. By contrast, Konkomba had such 'chiefs' in only two out of ten autonomous Konkomba villages in the same area. Both were villages where various clan communities coexisted; each community had a family elder (*uninkpel*) but they also recognised the elder of the senior community as earth priest (*utindaan*) and a young member of that family as a 'chief', who mediated between these clans. However, three villages with a comparable social structure lacked such a 'chief' and so did five all homogeneous (in terms of kinship) Konkomba villages in the sample, where the family elder simultaneously performed earth sacrifices as earth priest.

## The interests of the princes of Nanun

In the previous section, we have seen that many Konkomba in Nanun did not want their leaders to be ‘Nanumba’. However, many of them did not just want the moral freedom to choose their leadership but they also challenged the integrity of Nanumba chiefs. This assessment was exacerbated by an intra-Nanumba chieftaincy dispute. The death of Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II in 1999 triggered a lingering succession dispute revolving around the ‘eligibility’ to paramount chieftaincy (peace clause six). Playing a crucial role in the dispute, the chief of Chamba lost his credibility and authority among Konkomba in Chamba, but also among many Nanumba I spoke to. Sketching the Bimbilla dispute is therefore necessary for an understanding of the post-2002 developments in the Chamba dispute.

Entitlement to the Bimbilla skin alternates between two *dunoli*, gates or royal ‘houses’: The bangle house (Banyili) and the lion house (Gbugmayili), which both trace descent from Nmantambu, the founder of Nanun. Since a certain chief of Dakpam (Naa Kponguhu) and the son of the late chief of Nakpa (Naa Asamboni), killed the allegedly despotic tenth Bimbilla Naa Sulgu, their offspring have alternately occupied the Bimbilla skin. Most Nanumba villages became hierarchically divided over either gate. All Nanumba chiefs are *naabihi* (sg. *naabia*) – literally ‘children of the chief’ and popularly translated as ‘princes’ and ‘princesses’ – and entitled to skins but not all children of the chief become chief themselves. *Naabihi* become commoners after three generations without incumbency.

Competition to the Bimbilla skin has often been marked with tensions within the gates. When Ferguson visited Bimbilla in 1892, he was told about a bloody conflict over the Bimbilla skin two years earlier and all subsequent installations required state intervention (Skalnik 1979: 47). In the slipstream of chieftaincy violence in Dagbon in 1969, the Nanumba Traditional Council was pressed by the Government to issue a document called *Nanumba Customary Regulations and Procedures*. These regulations confirmed the alternation between the Banyili and Gbugmayili gates, specifically between the respective highest positions of the Dakpam Naa and Nakpa Naa.

An unwritten requirement, for many Nanumba, is that a chief cannot surpass his father or grandfather. It was this controversy which created the current dispute: While Andani is the son of a former Bimbilla Naa but holds no chieftaincy title himself, Nakpa Naa Salifu holds the highest title within the Gbugmayili lineage, but neither his grandfather nor his father were chiefs of Bimbilla. How did this controversy come about?

When the Gbugmayili skin of Bakpaba village became vacant in the late 1980s, Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II (from Banyili gate) asked one Suha Naa to

run, but he refused because if he accepted this skin, he would surpass his father's reach. However, his younger brother Salifu Dawuni accepted the offer. When the chief of Nakpa died he was promoted from Bakpaba to Nakpa in 1990.<sup>21</sup> This was despite objections by Kpatihi Naa Ponadoo (a senior chief in Bimbilla) and the chief of Lepusi,<sup>22</sup> who summoned the Bimbilla Naa to High Court. When they lost their case early 1993,<sup>23</sup> Nakpa Naa Salifu Dawuni was attacked at his palace and he fled to the Konkomba community, who protected him from his opponent Nanumba! The dispute between Bimbilla Naa Abarika and Kpatihi Naa Ponadoo reached such heights that Naa Abarika abolished the Kpatihi Naa's function as kingmaker. The DCE described the summer of 1993 as 'full of tensions'.<sup>24</sup>

The 1994 Konkomba/Nanumba conflict temporarily eclipsed the case, to resurface when Bimbilla Naa Abarika Attah II died on 22 August 1999.<sup>25</sup> One group, a Gbugmayili minority but almost all Banyili chiefs, defended Bimbilla Naa Abarika's enskinment of Nakpa Naa Salifu Dawuni and stressed the promotional system of chieftaincy. Another group of mostly Gbugmayili chiefs objected that Salifu Dawuni should never have become Nakpa Naa in the first place, let alone Bimbilla Naa, and they therefore supported the chief of Juanayili, the second-highest Gbugmayili chief and son of Bimbilla Naa Dasana.

Both sides agreed to the power of decision of the nine electors or kingmakers (*naakpema*) to choose the next Bimbilla Naa, but they quarrelled about the hierarchy of these authorities. This issue was complicated by the internal divisions of these kingmakers and by the situation that five of the nine kingmakers were dead and represented by regents whose power of decision was contested because they were not officially installed as chiefs.

This was a stalemate: If only proper kingmakers could install a Bimbilla Naa but only a proper Bimbilla Naa could install the kingmakers, there was never going to be a solution. Realising this, the Bimbilla regent by exception claimed the sovereignty to install the Wulensi chief and kingmaker in 2002, a decision which was generally received with aversion, because it was untraditional. How-

<sup>21</sup> NDA/L/11/v.3/22 Registrar Nanumba Traditional Council to The PNDC Dist. Secretary (14-06-1990) 'Out-Dooring Ceremony of the Nakpa-Na Salifu Dawuni at Nakpa'.

<sup>22</sup> NDA/L/11/v.3/11 Registrar Nanumba Traditional Area to All Chiefs, Nanumba Trad. Area (05-02-1990) 'Emergency Meeting of Chiefs – Nanumba Traditional Area'.

<sup>23</sup> NDA/P/20/vol.4/13 Ag. District Chief Executive (19-04-1993) 'Quarterly Report for the First Quarter, January – March 1993 of the Nanumba District Assembly'.

<sup>24</sup> NDA/P/20/vol.4/n.n. Ag. District Chief Executive 'Quarterly Report for the Third Quarter – from July to September 1993: Nanumba District Assembly'.

<sup>25</sup> NDA/L/11/v.3/260 District Chief Executive to H.E. The President (03-03-2003) 'Re: Delegation of Na-Abarika Family of the Banyili Royal Gate of Nanumba Paramountcy to Call on His Excellency the President of Ghana Mr. J.K. Kufuour at the Castle, Osu'.

ever, the kingmakers used their authenticity and claims to be subjected to earth spirits as a cloak for political allegiances.

Things got even more complicated when the main opponent to the Nakpa Naa, the chief of Juanayili, died in January 2003. His supporters thereupon found the dead chief's young brother prepared to stand on his brother's behalf. This Andani Dasana, an entrepreneur with a Tamale rice company, was no chief, but his supporters suggested that he could be granted a minor title for a day before promoting him to the Bimbilla skin. Due to the complication, the funeral of Bimbilla Naa Abarika was postponed twice and finally performed late March 2003. At the last day of the funeral, the regent was to step down for a new Bimbilla Naa. But during the funeral, the District Security Council (DISEC) realised that the kingmakers would not be able to close their ranks and therefore suspended the enskinment of a Bimbilla Naa until the kingmakers had reached consensus. However, after the funeral, the eldest son of the late chief stepped down as a regent and Nanun became headless.

In the night of 3 April, a group of kingmakers ignored the DISEC ban and tried to secretly perform the enskinment rituals on Andani. They were however caught in the act by police and detained in a Tamale prison for some days. National media started to compare the Bimbilla dispute to the Dagbon crisis.<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, the Nanumba Traditional Council established a Judicial Committee, chaired by the Chamba chief, in June, to declare which kingmaker had the decisive sovereignty.

After three rounds of hearings with the kingmakers, the committee presented its report on 29 July 2003, unanimously backing the Juo Naa as leading kingmaker, who chose Nakpa Naa Salifu as next Bimbilla Naa.<sup>27</sup> In a strange twist however, Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan, renounced this decision the very same day in a letter to the Regional House of Chiefs.<sup>28</sup> The chief of Chamba had had a personal quarrel with the late Bimbilla Naa, who was a family member, and he therefore by principle objected to the Nakpa Naa because he had the backing of that chief. With his move, Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan lost his credibility among many Nanumba I spoke to and among Konkomba in Chamba, who saw this as proof that the chief was an intriguer.

Despite Chamba Naa's move, the Nanumba Traditional Council allowed the Juo Naa to enskin Nakpa Naa Salifu Dawuni as the Bimbilla Naa in early August. But as the leader of the dissenting kingmakers (Kpatihi Naa) cried foul

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<sup>26</sup> GW (29-05-2003) 'Another Dagbon in the offering? Two gates clash over Bimbilla skin'.

<sup>27</sup> 'In the High Court of Justice Tamale. The Republic vrs The Registrar of the Nanumba Traditional Council Ex Parte Andani Dasana' (15-10-2003); 'In the Judicial Committee of the Nanumba Traditional Council, Bimbilla' (08-08-2003).

<sup>28</sup> NDA/L/11/vol.4/21 Chairman of the Judicial Committee, Chamba Naa Alhassan Salifu to The Registrar Northern Regional House of Chiefs (29-07-2003)

in a press conference, accusing the Vice-President Alhaji Aliu Mahama, a Dagomba, for choosing sides with Nakpa Naa, the regional administration reported that Bimbilla was 'on the brink of chaos' and the Regional Minister banned all chieftaincy activities in Bimbilla.<sup>29</sup> That same week, 'Bimbilla Naa' Salifu Dawuni cleared the Vice-President of the accusations and rather accused Andani of buying the support of the Chamba Naa.<sup>30</sup>

Andani summoned his opponents to High Court later that month. Although High Court has no jurisdiction in chieftaincy affairs, it had the power to judge the legitimacy of Traditional Council Judicial Committees. After hearing from most key actors, including kingmakers and the Traditional Council registrar, the Court quashed the Judicial Committee in January 2004 because it was 'not properly constituted'.<sup>31</sup>

After that, Andani petitioned the Asantehene for his mediation,<sup>32</sup> who charged Nayiri Boahugu Mahami, the Mamprusi paramount chief and the President of the Northern Region House of Chiefs, to mediate in the Bimbilla dispute. His delegation met the kingmakers at Bimbilla in March, 2005, after which the Nayiri invited the kingmakers to his palace in Nalerigu a week later. There, he challenged the kingmakers to go home to find an amicable solution, and report back in two weeks.<sup>33</sup> When the kingmakers did so, they had not found consensus. The Mamprusi paramount chief thereupon called the kingmakers to Nalerigu one last time and asked them to thumbprint a declaration in which they accepted his power of decision.<sup>34</sup> All nine kingmakers signed this declaration and on 18 Octo-

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<sup>29</sup> Kpatih Naa 'Press Release by the Gbugmayili Clan of the Nanumba Traditional Council at a Press Conference Held on the 8th August, 2003'; respectively District Chief Executive to The Juo Regent *et al* (07-08-2003) 'Halt on All Activities in Connection with the Enskinment of Bimbilla-Na'; Regional Co-Ordinating Director to Yunyoo-Rana *et al* (15-08-2003) 'Committee of Enquiry into the Bimbilla Chieftaincy Crisis'.

<sup>30</sup> 'Reaction of the Bimbilla-Naa Alhaji Dawuni Salifu II to the Press Release by the Gbugmayili Clan of the Nanumba Traditional Council at a Press Conference Held on the 8th August 2003 at Accra'.

<sup>31</sup> 'In the High Court of Justice, Northern Region Held at Tamale on Monday the 26th Day of January, 2004. Before His Lordship Jones Dotse, Appeal Court Judge Sitting as an Additional Court Judge'; 'In the High Court of Justice Tamale. The Republic vrs The Registrar of the Nanumba Traditional Council Exparte Andani Dasana, Bimbilla-Naa' (28-08-2003; 10-09-2003; 15-10-2003). In April, Juo Naa appealed to the Supreme Court, but his subsequent withdrawal cost him a 10 million cedi penalty (NDA/L/11/vol.4/18 'Quarterly Reports – Nanumba Traditional Council, Bimbilla. 2nd Quarter Ended 30th June, 2004').

<sup>32</sup> NDA/L/11/vol.4/n.n. Bimbilla-Na Andani Dasana Abdulai to The President, National House of Chiefs (29-04-2004) 'Protecting Chieftaincy and Custom in Nanung'.

<sup>33</sup> NDA/L/11/vol.4/38 District Co-Ordinating Director to The District Police Commander e.a. (10-03-2005) 'Meeting of Nayiri's Delegation with the Kingmakers of Nanung'; NDA/L/11/vol.4/40 Juo Gbang-Lana to All Kingmakers (March 2005) 'Meeting of Nanun Kingmakers'; 'Minutes of DISEC Meeting Held in the Office of the District Chief Executive on Wednesday, 30th March, 2005'.

<sup>34</sup> 'Note on Commitment to the Resolution of the Impasse Regarding the Nomination of a Candidate from the Gbugumayili 'Gate' of Nanung Traditional Area as Successor to the Vacant 'Skin' of Bimbilla following the Death of Naa Abakari II'.

ber, Nayiri stated that Andani should be the Bimbilla Naa.<sup>35</sup> The kingmakers' delegation of their sovereignty to the Mamprusi chief subverted several simultaneous NGO initiatives including Catholic Relief Services) to empower the alleged authentic kingmakers.

When Nakpa Naa Salifu Dawuni heard about the arbitration of the Nayiri, he was outraged and immediately stepped to the Northern Region House of Chiefs, which quashed Nayiri's verdict the next month. This made Bimbilla so tense that after the death of two sub-chiefs, a clean-up exercise at the old Gbugmayili palace on 6 January led to fighting. A big clash happened three days later, when a power outage during a naming ceremony in the butcher's neighbourhood was interpreted by some guests as a sabotage.<sup>36</sup> A dusk to dawn curfew was enforced until May and again, the Bimbilla dispute made sensational headlines in national media.<sup>37</sup>

Ever since, there has been a status quo as both sides awaited the investigations of the Northern Region House of Chiefs. Meanwhile, there has been a ban on chiefly festivals for almost a decade, and chiefs are not allowed to join in Muslim prayers. Nanumba society is utterly divided over the case: While the young and literate Andani had the popular support in Bimbilla town, and also the support of *kambonsi* warriors and leading Muslim families, while most Banyili gate villages and NAYA seniors from those villages supported Nakpa Naa.

Many respondents thought that the dispute retarded development in Nanun and many feared its negative effect on Konkomba/Nanumba relations. Commenting on the situation that more than half of the skins are vacant, a senior Nanumba said that 'we are making ourselves irrelevant' and he doubted whether Konkomba would accept a new Nanumba chief in such villages. Most Konkomba tried to stand aloof from the Bimbilla affairs but they believed that the case hindered a solution in the Chamba chieftaincy dispute and similar disputes.

The Bimbilla dispute shows that Assefa's idea of a stable traditional rule was fictional and that eligibility of paramount chieftaincy was far from consensual. The case showed how both sides in the dispute resorted to legal interventions in order to halt the untraditional, politicized and hence illegal activities of the opponents. This is the context in which both Konkomba and Nanumba were suspicious of the 'interests' of chiefs. In December 2006, the chief of Chamba died, an

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<sup>35</sup> Naa-Boahugu Mahami Abudulai Sheriga (King of Mamprugu) to The Regional Minister (20-10-2006) 'Settlement of Dispute Concerning Succession to the Naam of Bimbilla'.

<sup>36</sup> District Co-Ordinating Director to The Regional Minister 'Report on Security Situation in Bimbilla on Tuesday, 10th January, 2006'.

<sup>37</sup> DG (11-01-2006) 'Let's silence the war drums'; DG (11-01-2006) 'Mayhem looms in Nanumba North'; GT (11-01-2006) 'Curfew at Bimbilla following communal fight'; DG (12-01-2006) 'Curfew imposed on Nanumba North area'

event which brought both the Bimbilla and the Chamba disputes back centre-stage in a dramatic way.

### From headmen to women groups (2005-2006)

As seen above, tensions subsided in the Chamba case after leaders of the Konkomba and Nanumba Youth Associations met the Regional Security Council in late 2002. This meeting did much to debunk ethnic interpretations of the dispute. However, the contestation was left to simmer locally, as it was overshadowed by the chieftaincy affairs in Bimbilla. However, early 2005 a peace-building programme from the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) gave new impetus to a resolution thereby unfortunately, and unintentionally, contributing to a new escalation of the Chamba dispute.

Although CRS had been a prominent member of the NGO Consortium, its peace-building activities got new impetus in 2004 with the establishment of the Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS), funded by CRS and USAID.<sup>38</sup> The Centre was to coordinate local projects of five so-called 'satellite peace centres' attached to the various dioceses in the former conflict zone. Both Bimbilla and Chamba parishes are under Yendi diocese and came under the responsibility of William Abakisi, secretary of the Yendi bishop and the Diocesan Development Office, and especially the Bimbilla-based St. Gildas nun Melanie Amikiya.

In February 2005, the Yendi satellite peace centre organised a meeting in Bimbilla for opinion leaders from all parts of society, mostly Nanumba, and asked them to list the biggest peace problems in the district.<sup>39</sup> Bimbilla and Chamba chieftaincy disputes topped this list and were selected for peace-building workshops. In May, Amikiya (popularly known as Sister Melanie), Abakisi and the director of CRS, Aidan Saabie Naah, none of them Konkomba or Nanumba, organised separate meetings with the three main actors – Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan, Biligban and Nyilyar – to rally their cooperation for a peace workshop from 22-24 June 2005, at the Chamba mission, with delegations of the three parties.

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<sup>38</sup> Set up as a Roman Catholic Church relief organisation in the post-First World War USA, CRS extended its programme to worldwide poverty reduction, including Ghana, after the Second World War with USAID support. In the 1970s, CRS shifted its attention from relief aid to development (education, health care and food production). In 1996, the national CRS headquarters moved from Accra to Tamale, because most CRS activities were in the north. This centre was the continuation of the Northern Peace Project, which Bishop Philip Naameh of the newly created Damongo diocese in western Gonja had founded because he saw peace-building a necessary prerequisite for evangelisation.

<sup>39</sup> Coordinator CECOTAPS (08-02-2005) 'Invitation to Participate in Nanumba District Peacebuilding Dialogue'.

The CRS director infused these workshops with a paradigmatic approach. Aidan, who holds a BA degree in Social Sciences and a Diploma in Education and specialises in preventive health issues, received training in peace mediation in the United States from John-Paul Lederach. As seen in chapter one, Lederach was an influential peace mediator and scholar and a devout Christian, like Assefa. Theoretically, similarities between Assefa and Lederach are significant, as both focus on reconciliation, forgiveness and healing.

However, acknowledging that the issues of war are ‘nested’ in a broader context, Lederach argued that the challenge for reconciliation would be to transform a society from a ‘war-system’ to a ‘peace-system’ (1997: 59, 84). While Assefa found peace enshrined in traditions, Lederach argued that a peace-system was something new. He wrote in his 2005 *The Moral Imagination* that peace-building required the participants’ ‘moral imagination’, to ‘imagine the canvas of social change’ (2005: 74). There is one additional and crucial difference between Assefa and Lederach: While the former wanted to base peace on grassroots, the latter wanted it to emerge from the ‘middle level’ actors, such as ethnic and religious leaders and intellectuals, who stood strategically in between the grassroots and top leaders (Lederach 1997: 41). Aidan strongly believed in society’s self-organising mechanisms to transform conflicts to a peace culture. His treatment of the Chamba case as a ‘stepping stone’ for Konkomba/Nanumba problems at large reflected Lederach’s paradigm that conflicts are ‘nested’ in wider problematic contexts.

Let’s look at this approach in more detail. I was able to observe the meeting between Aidan’s group (known locally as *kimòkpaanyaab* or ‘peace people’) and Nyilyar with twenty of his entourage, including the Youth Chairman. The workshop, which lasted for three hours, took place in the mission garden. An educated relative of Nyilyar was asked to translate from English to Likpakpaln. The workshops were marked by improvisation, no records were taken and both the organisers and the participants were nervous.

Between opening and closing prayers, at least four phases passed to empower the participants. First, upon Sister Melanie asking, Nyilyar explained that traditional problem-solving requires that elders ‘sit together’. Melanie thereupon replied that the chieftaincy dispute had to be addressed in this way. Second, Sister Melanie argued that the root causes of the conflict had to be addressed for; she showed a small tree and explained that if the roots are not well it would not bear fruits. She asked about the roots of the dispute, and Nyilyar said: ‘they [Nanumba] want us to fight among ourselves’.

Third, after that, Sister Melanie took a spread sheet and asked the participants to identify the actors involved in the dispute and the evaluate the relations between these actors. Worth noting is the relationship with Chamba Naa, which a

follower of Nyilyar described as ‘very bad, because he is corrupt’. Aidan asked the participants to think about changing the relations which they had just evaluated. A participant wanted to start greeting Biligban and Chamba Naa supporters, and Nyilyar said that he was prepared to meet Chamba Naa or Biligban. Aidan told the participants to clap for these promises. Finally, Aidan emphasised that CECOTAPS could only play a facilitating role but that the solution should come from the participants themselves. He announced a joint follow up workshop for the three parties and asked the participants to choose a representation of ten people including three youth and two women.

The announced joint workshop of three factions made up of elders, youth and women took place between 19-21 December 2005, on neutral grounds, in Sunson village near Yendi. I was unable to attend and so was Sister Melanie, who was replaced by Father Rasmus (a Konkomba) from Saboba Technical School. Aidan had deliberately chosen a location with only one hall but the first night most participants refused to sleep together and many took their mattresses to the veranda.

The next morning Aidan organised role plays which, according to him, led to the easing of tensions. After lunch, Aidan asked each faction to desist from accusations and rather to phrase their core fear. Nanumba felt threatened as a minority while both Konkomba factions feared that Nanumba wanted to divide and rule them. Aidan told the whole group not to be afraid. After the general session, Fr. Rasmus took the Biligban and Nyilyar groups apart and told them that they both reacted the same to the Nanumba group. He told them to stop allowing Nanumba to divide them. The outcome of this day was that the groups agreed to maintain the current status quo and exercise patience. That night, as several participants told me, almost every participant slept inside the hall.

The next day, the two Konkomba groups agreed that they would ‘sit together’ and find a solution, while the Nanumba delegation promised to completely resign from it and accept any outcome, provided it was mediated by Nmabini (the son of Fiindi, the first Konkomba in town). Aidan put the agreements on paper in a declaration, and under the auspices of the bishop of Yendi, the participants put their thumbprints under it.<sup>40</sup> Having achieved this solution, that the Konkomba ‘earth priest’ in town would lead the resolution attempts and that the Chamba chief would recognise any outcome, the facilitators said that the time had now come to talk about development issues.

Back in Chamba, the chief called Nmabini to his palace and indeed delegated his sovereignty to him. A few days later Nmabini organised a meeting between Nyilyar and Biligban, but the latter did not accept Nmabini’s authority, probably because he feared the outcome of his meditation, and refused to attend to the

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<sup>40</sup> ‘The Sung-Sung Declaration’ (20-12-2005).

meeting. Momentum passed and in spite of repeatedly receiving the blame from the Chamba Naa, Nmabini conceded.

However, this status quo was eclipsed by another outcome of the Sunson meeting, namely the CECOTAPS shift towards development issues in order to take away the seed-bed for conflict. Empowering women for the development in town demonstrated CECOTAPS' dedication towards poverty reduction, a development paradigm which explicitly linked poverty to insecurity (see chapter four). This approach reversed Assefa's insistence that development required peace between 'brothers in development', and although it was initially successful, this technocratic focus on development eventually boomeranged back to the chieftaincy dispute, when the chief exercised his sovereignty in two development issues. The subsequent events produced Nanumba rumours that Konkomba wanted to sack Nanumba from their land. Let's trace the genesis of these tensions.

In May 2006, Sister Melanie invited women from the three disputing parties to Sunson to 'prepare a brighter future for our children'.<sup>41</sup> Sister Melanie found the women more cooperative than the men. They agreed to abstain from gossiping in the presence of their children and founded a Chamba women's group. Back in Chamba, they marked their agreement with a parade and they thereupon set up a women's group led by the local catechist.

The Chamba women's group developed beyond expectation, enrolling more than one hundred women within the first six months. Their monthly meetings were held in Likpakpaln, which most Nanumba women could understand. In the meetings, issues of conflict and chieftaincy were shied, but the women did talk about the need for e.g. a micro credit programme. It was however in one of those meetings that the seeds for a near-escalation of the Chamba dispute were sown.

In the 21 October 2006 meeting, a Konkomba woman raised the issue of the measurement of food stuffs in Chamba market: Traders in Chamba market – many of whom were Nanumba women – had a monopoly on the measuring of food stuffs, whether for purchasing or for selling and they always took a share for themselves. Chamba women, who usually sold their husband's produce in the market, Nanumba included, saw it as a kind of cheating and they called for the right to measure their own produce.

When Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan, the self-declared owner of the market heard about this, he was red hot. His anger has to be understood from earlier events. On 21 September, namely, the chief had called all Konkomba and Nanumba butchers to his palace, informing them about the completion of a District Assembly abattoir. The chief however said that he denied access of illegal butchers in town, who did not recognise the authority of the chief butcher

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<sup>41</sup> Sr. Melanie Amikiya (Satellite Peace Centre) (25-04-2006) 'Invitation to a workshop'.

(see chapter four), to the slaughter house. Upon Konkomba butchers asking, Chamba Naa specified that the Konkomba butchers did not follow the rules of the Chamba chief butcher (*nakoha naa*) who resided in Wulensi. These rules included the offering to the chief butcher of the legs, skin and intestines of each slaughtered animal for the upkeep of the butchers' association. The Konkomba butchers objected that they had never met any chief butcher and that the abattoir was built by the District Assembly for all butchers to use it. The culminating tensions led to a DISEC visit to Chamba on 26 September, and the District Chief Executive collected the key of the abattoir until further notice.

On 26 September, also, local government elections were held in Ghana. In Chamba, the incumbent District Assembly member, who was on reasonable terms with the chief, lost the elections to Daniel Nakoja, a charismatic Konkomba literacy activist in town whom the chief considered a warmonger. In sum, his argument with the Konkomba butchers and the election of Nakoja together made the Chamba Naa worried about his authority in town.

Two days after the October women group's meeting, Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan wrote a letter to the District Chief Executive,<sup>42</sup> informing him about a Konkomba 'by-law', in which he saw the hands of Nakoja. The letter informed the DCE about a three-week suspension of Chamba market. The District Security Council (DISEC) responded to the letter by visiting Chamba. There, they backed the chief and warned Nakoja about his behaviour. Nakoja was however falsely put to blame because he had no role in the women's group. With his exclusion of Konkomba butchers and his suspension of the Chamba market, the chief of Chamba claimed his sovereignty to counter a 'by-law' and he had DISEC support. Many Konkomba in Chamba felt betrayed by DISEC and the DCE. Only two months later, DISEC seemed to realise that the chief did not actually have such sovereignty in terms of development and security (see below).

It was surprising to witness how a case between farmers and traders became ethnic; although Nanumba women initially backed the uprising, they fell silent when their chief imposed a boycott. This shift is another example of Lonsdale's analytical distinction between internal moral ethnicity and external political tribalism. On Friday 27 October, Nanumba and Dagomba traders from Bimbilla and Tamale boycotted the market of Chamba and set up roadblocks to prevent traders other parts of Ghana from attending to the market. Most Konkomba refused the boycott.<sup>43</sup> Although the boycott lasted for three weeks, increasing numbers of traders from other parts of the country reached Chamba by taking

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<sup>42</sup> Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan to The DCE (23-10-2006) 'Halting of commercial activities'.

<sup>43</sup> That the chief positioned himself as the owner of the market in Chamba was surprising because, as seen in chapter four, Konkomba women had started this market by selling beer outside the Nanun market cycle in the 1970s.

bush paths and they kept the market running; one trader bought the entire groundnut supply!

A dramatic event further escalated the market situation in Chamba. On 7 December, on the eve of the first market day since the three-week boycott, Chamba Naa Salifu Alhassan died in an Accra hospital after a short sickbed. The next day, as the market was suspended, the corpse was escorted back to Chamba where he was buried in the palace the same day with financial contributions from both Biligban and Nyilyar. In the subsequent week, a series of funeral ceremonies were organised in the Chamba palace, which I hope to study in more detail elsewhere. Two events on the last two days of the funeral were however crucial.

First, on Thursday, Biligban organised a large Konkomba round-dance which is customary in Konkomba funerals. Although most Konkomba families had not been informed about the dance, since they did not recognise Biligban as their chief, and some visiting Nanumba elders were uneasy with the exuberant Konkomba dance, this dancing performance was one of my most impressive field-work experiences, because of the chaotic but elated temper of the Konkomba young men and women and Nanumba women, including the daughters of the late chief. Precisely its non-authenticity made it so touching for me, because I seemed to be watching an improvised reconciliation ceremony rather than a traditional dance. However, some Nanumba visitors from Bimbilla considered the chaotic dance a sign of anarchy (see below).

Second, the next day, on Friday 15 December, the Chamba market was again suspended to mark the final funeral ceremony of the chief. Again, hundreds of dignitaries from across Nanun attended, including dozens of Muslims from Bimbilla and a group of CHAYA members from Accra. Since the chief was a devout Muslim, this ceremony consisted mainly of praying. During the prayers, a sub-chief from Bimbilla gave some coins to a Muslim prayer to preach for the well-being of the Nakpa Naa, one of the contestants of the Bimbilla chieftaincy. This prayer sparked off a riot among some Nanumba chiefs after which the security forces cancelled the ceremony.

In sum, the last two days of the ceremony suggested that Chamba appeared to eclipse the Konkomba/Nanumba market tensions, because of an exuberant joint Konkomba/Nanumba dance and a riot among Nanumba chiefs. However, these tensions resurfaced after the funeral to reach a boiling point ten days later. On Friday 22 December, as Chamba had its first significant market in almost two months, Nanumba traders returning from Chamba market spread the rumour in Bimbilla that they had seen weapons in that market. Within a day, rumours were

buzzing around that Konkomba were preparing to step in the power vacuum of Chamba, just like they had seized control over the Kpasa area in 1981.<sup>44</sup>

In this altered form, these rumours spread back from Bimbilla to Chamba. So when two days later, on Christmas Eve, a shed burned down incidentally in Chamba, most Nanumba in town fled to Bimbilla overnight. The next morning, police enforcements were sent to Chamba, where Christmas was celebrated in a very sober way. In the Roman Catholic mass, the Christmas round-dance was suspended and Daniel Nakoja begged the congregation to remain calm under all circumstances.

### Security and peace meetings (2006-2007)

While that very evening, Nanumba refugees started to return home, news of a potential new conflict between Konkomba and Nanumba spread like wildfire, making headlines in national media.<sup>45</sup> The three weeks after Christmas were marked by a lot of meetings and activities, mostly outside of Chamba town.

Immediately after Christmas, on 27 December, Regional Minister Alhaji Mustapha Ali Idris (a Dagomba) and the Regional Security Council of top military and police executives came to Bimbilla for an emergency meeting at the District Assembly hall. The tensions invoked such an active role of government representatives, because the national government did not want the upcoming 'Golden Jubilee' or Ghana's 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Day overshadowed by ethnic conflict. Although the meeting was held in the District Assembly hall, there were very few local government representatives among the more than one hundred 'chiefs and opinion leaders'. More than two hundred Nanumba, and some Konkomba from Chamba too, followed the meeting through loudspeakers outside the hall, and they clamped to the windows when electricity broke down.

The meeting was opened by the two Nanumba District Chief Executives. While Saeed (the Nanumba North DCE and a Nanumba) said that the District Security Council was still investigating the rumours, Ogajah (the Nanumba South DCE and a Konkomba) stated that, after a 'fact-finding mission', he knew that the rumours were simply not true. Whereas the latter implicitly found rumouring Nanumba in Bimbilla a source of insecurity, Saeed seemed to take the rumours at

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<sup>44</sup> Although many Nanumba expected a new Bimbilla Naa to stretch his authority to this area again, Konkomba leaders in Kpasa and Damanko towns said that they would not accept such Nanumba authorities. But when in 1997, Akyodé again tried to gain control over the Kpasa area, the Volta Region based Konkomba lawyer Jejeti petitioned the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team, which had extended its arbitration to this part of the country, and stated on behalf of the Konkomba leadership in Kpasa land that 'the person who has jurisdiction over the land [...] is the Paramount Chief of Bimbilla' ('Lawyer Jacob Jejeti on behalf of Konkomba Chiefs in Nkwanta District to The Permanent Peace Negotiation Team' (06-01-1998)).

<sup>45</sup> GW (27-12-2006) 'Konkombas and Nanumbas brace up for another conflict'.

face value, assuming that there is no smoke without fire, and described Chamba as the source of danger.

The Regional Minister then spoke for over half an hour, the first ten minutes in English and the rest in Dagbanli (similar to Nanunli). He made no effort to speak Likpakpaln and his speech was not translated into that language either. It may be noted that most Konkomba understand Nanunli, which is also the most common language of communication between them. However, the majority of Nanumba also understand basic Likpakpaln.

In the speech of the Minister, the Dagbanli part of his speech was of similar content as the English part, albeit in a much more proverbial form. He hardly spoke about Chamba but he made two related points about his indiscriminate determination to development and security. First, he said that ‘This government is your government’ because ‘you voted for President Kufuor’ and that this government had an interest in the development of Nanun, and therefore Kufuor had nominated a Konkomba and a Nanumba DCE. However, government budgets ‘wasted’ on peace-keeping could be spent on development, so therefore the opinion leaders should advise their communities to abstain from violence. He prayed that he would never have to use military force on the district but he would hesitate to do so if people took the law in their own hands. The Minister did not specify this warning.

In the ensuing open forum, the latent disagreement between both DCEs – the Nanumba Saeed found Chamba insecure while the Konkomba Ogajah considered rumour mongering Bimbilla unsafe – was continued in former MP George Mpanbe (a Konkomba) who asked the chiefs to send all rumourmongers to the security agencies, and in two NAYA peers who said that they had witnessed, during the funeral of the chief, that Chamba was ‘a very unsafe town’. Outside the hall, there were similar thoughts about the origins of insecurity. However, Konkomba suspicions that Nanumba rumourmongers wanted to provoke them and Nanumba thoughts that Konkomba wanted to seize the land of Chamba were eclipsed by a mutual fear for a supernatural force of violence. Those good at counting saw that Nanun was bedevilled by a thirteen year cycle of violence, after 1981 and 1994.

To my interlocutors, rumour was the main expression of this evil spell. Although rumour is a very strong public expression in any case (Ellis 1989), in conflict situations it is often the only source of information (Robben & Nordstrom 1995: 15). De Boeck (2008) argued that rumours straddle publicity and privacy as the ‘awkward intimacy of a public secrecy’ (cf. Das 2007: 105, 111, 130), hence triggering the need to validate or falsify them.<sup>46</sup> As news spread

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<sup>46</sup> The uncertain truthfulness in rumours is evident from the Konkomba and Nanumba concepts of rumours. Most Konkomba described the rumours as *tibòr ñuulnkaan*, implicating issues of which

around Bimbilla or Chamba, my interlocutors always first asked the messenger: ‘Who told you?’ It struck me that during the tensions, few to no Nanumba went to Chamba to see if the Konkomba there were indeed preparing for war, and those who did mistrusted the town’s normality; few Konkomba went to Bimbilla to say that they were not. I elaborate on this insight in the next chapter.

Students on Christmas break tried to stop the cycle of rumours and mistrust and replace it with dialogue. Many people I spoke to were disappointed in the Regional Minister who had only tried to empower the heavily divided chiefs and elders, without addressing the Chamba issue. There was however one group of people who felt responsible for averting further tensions: Students. Because it was Christmas break, most Konkomba and Nanumba college students were with their families. During college breaks, students usually engage in voluntary clean up exercises and health education programmes. While the Konkomba-Bassari Students Union (KOBASU) holds its annual congress during Summer break, the Nanumba Students Union has its congress (‘the homecoming week’) during Christmas break. During this week, students organise sports matches, quizzes, movie shows and a durbar for educated opinion leaders.

Responding to the tensions, NASU leaders contacted KOBASU students from Chamba to play a soccer match with them in Chamba to give a message of peace, but the Police Superintendent forbade the match from being played, because he feared it would exacerbate tensions. Despite this disappointment, NASU and KOBASU leaders agreed to meet each other on 29 December in Bimbilla to discuss their possible role in reducing the tensions. At a closed door meeting (to which I was allowed), the students openly spoke (in English) about their fears of another conflict (‘If I hear a gunshot I will shit in my pants’) and their doubts about the position they were in. They felt a great responsibility to unite NASU and KOBASU in a Nanun Students Union. In fact, these students came under serious stress and many of them were to arrive back on campus two weeks late. This activism of students was a clear sign of the declining moral authority of the Youth Associations, of which students were junior members. NASU stimulated the KOBASU leaders to organise a conference in Chamba to convince everyone that this town was safe.

But before this meeting on 3 January, Nanumba students held their annual homecoming durbar on 30 December, which had the surprisingly topical theme ‘Peaceful coexistence: A tool for quality education’. The meeting was more informal than the Regional Security Council (REGSEC) meeting and the whole programme was in English. Whereas REGSEC had addressed the chiefs, this

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they do not know whether they are true; Nanumba usually called the rumours *lahibaya*, or ‘the masses have said’. These words differed from what may be called gossip, information which lack authority but of which the truth is not doubted (LIK *mbornyun*; NAN *tinmarlim*).

meeting mainly linked politicians to students. After several Nanumba dancing performances, there were speeches of the DCEs, MPs a Minister of State and the national coordinator of the Ghana Network for Peace-Building (GHANEP), which was founded in 2002 as an umbrella platform organisation for over fifty NGOs working on peace-building.

Thomas Ogajah (Nanumba South DCE) opened the programme by repeating that the rumours that Konkomba in Chamba were preparing to take up arms against Nanumba were untrue and by saying that peace must be a priority to students as future leaders of Nanun. After that, Salifu Saeed (the Nanumba North DCE) and Mohammed ibn Abass (Bimbilla MP) both briefly called for restraint and for student brokerage in the tensions after which they rallied applause for their development achievements. Many participants found the act of the DCE and MP, both Nanumba, of scoring off each other's development successes during such tensions in Nanun embarrassing.

In that sense, the speeches of Konkomba state executives were received much better. This was best exemplified in the speech of Charles Bintin, the Saboba MP and Minister of State. Like Ogajah, Bintin said that security personnel had to work harder to bring rumourmongers in Bimbilla to book. But while he held DISEC responsible for peace-keeping, Bintin said that Nanumba, or better put NAYA, as landowners should take the lead in organising a forum to peacefully resolve the tensions in Nanun. This statement earned him an ovation.

But the speech which had the largest impact on the audience was that of the charismatic national coordinator of the NGO consortium GHANEP. Amidu Ibrahim Zakaria, himself a Nanumba, stood on behalf of Emmanuel Bombande, the Ghanaian chairman of the umbrella West African Network for Peace-Building (WANEP) and former assistant of Hizkias Assefa during the Kumasi peace workshops. Amidu forwarded a message from Bombande that 'During the Kumasi 5 series we had a pledge and we should keep it'. This pledge was a vow of non-violence, which, as seen in chapter one, comprised one half of the Kumasi Accord. In his speech of around thirty minutes Amidu continuously coupled the pledge of non-violence to the need for dialogue about the contents of the peace deal.

He called security a responsibility of the people themselves. He said that although conflict is unavoidable, because no-one is the same, it matters how you go about conflict in a non-violent way. He called rumours and 'songs which make you want to vomit' the worst type of violence because it set up 'generations against generations'. He therefore called for tolerance and dialogue. While obviously a very different phenomenon from dialogue, Amidu left the theme of tolerance more or less unaddressed, the consequences of which I show below. On the need for dialogue he however said:

‘My brothers and sisters, any time in a society we find needs insecure, than what we do is we begin to build walls [...] around ourselves, because that is the only way to get security. But the real nature of humankind is that my security lies in the society and I have a responsibility to ensure the security of the other person. Where have we left the beautiful norms and customs of our beloved country? We either have to go back for it or we are a lost people.’

Assefa’s legacy came through in Amidu’s statement that although silence is a technique of security (‘we build walls’), it rather caused an insecure situation in which people rather talk about each other than to each other. Rather than tracing the roots of insecurity, he challenged the audience, students in particular, to engage in a dialogue about the issues at stake.

Inspired by this speech, the chairman of the durbar, the secondary school headman and a NAYA peer, obviously remembered the Kumasi workshops in which he participated and he asked all those present to rise and repeat a Kumasi workshop ritual. He asked them to take each others hand and sing ‘All we are saying is give peace a chance’! The invocation of such a globalised incantation (of John Lennon and Yoko Ono) was a striking form to take the sting out of the tensions. The song, which many participants sung at the top of their voices, was a direct reference to the Kumasi peace process. Immediately after the song, there was however another significant event in the spirit of that peace process.

Salifu Saeed, the Nanumba North DCE, namely, invited the Nanumba student leader to him and gave him a cup under the explanation that Nanumba and Konkomba students from Bimbilla and Chamba would have to play a soccer match every year during Christmas break to celebrate peace in Nanun. So, while police had forbidden a soccer match a week earlier, the head of DISEC now encouraged such a match. And here we are back at page one of this book, where I introduced the case of a soccer match between the Bimbilla and Chamba teams as a metaphor for peace in Nanun. The repercussions of this initiative therefore exceed this chapter and I will carry them over to the general conclusion in the next chapter.

While NASU had organised this durbar, they did not have a public voice. This changed on 3 January, when KOBASU organised a peace meeting in Chamba, where both Konkomba and Nanumba students gave speeches. In this meeting, chaired by former KOYA president Kenneth Wujangi, most executives who had delivered a speech in the Bimbilla durbar were present, except the Bimbilla MP, while there was also a KOYA representation from Saboba. But while these actors spoke to the people, KOBASU claimed to speak on behalf of these people.

So far, the speeches had revolved around the message to keep the peace in the interest of development. The KOBASU president however delivered a speech in which he said that Konkomba had been misrepresented in the REGSEC meeting: The depictions of Chamba as an unsafe town eclipsed the profound injustices in

this place: Chamba farmers were cheated in their market; Konkomba butchers were illegally denied access to the abattoir and Nanumba chiefs had their hands in Konkomba leadership. Saying that ‘Konkombas are fighting for their rights in accordance with the constitution of Ghana which is the supreme law of our Nation’, the spokesman called for an end to all these injustices.

After this speech, both the NASU president and the KOYA secretary spoke briefly to preach dialogue and student cooperation. The significance of this was that neither NASU nor KOYA directly reacted to the KOBASU speech; while the NASU president seemed to postpone his reaction to the KOBASU speech to a press conference half a week later (see below), the KOYA secretary rather seemed to have given the lead to the students.

It was significant that while the Nanumba North DCE Saeed, a Nanumba, was very gentle on his largely Konkomba audience, (in vain) promising them development projects, both the Nanumba South DCE (Ogajah) and the Minister of State (Bintin) spoke with more persuasion to the Konkomba audience than they had done to the Nanumba audience in Bimbilla. Charles Bintin first called for one minute silence for the memory of the Chamba Naa and then he told the audience that he found the Chamba tensions ‘a disgrace’. In other words, only Nanumba spokesmen dared to provoke their Nanumba audience; similarly, only Konkomba spokesmen were hard on Konkomba audiences.

But what united both DCEs and Bintin was their reaction to the issues raised by KOBASU. All three of them drew a sharp distinction between development cases (the abattoir and market controversies), which had to be solved by the District Assembly and DISEC, and the Konkomba leadership dispute in town, which the people themselves had to solve with reference to the Kumasi Accord. With this position, they withdrew their support to the late Chamba chief’s market boycott.

A similar distinction was made in a NASU reaction to the KOBASU paper at a 7 January press conference in Bimbilla. The president of NASU asked for a District Assembly resolution of the market and abattoir issues, but he also lined up behind the sovereignty of Nanumba chiefs, whom some Konkomba ‘have failed to give [...] the due recognition’. So while KOBASU had presented the abattoir, market and leadership cases as an interrelated set of injustices, emerging from the central role of the Chamba Naa in all these cases, NASU disentangled the development issues from the chieftaincy dispute. KOBASU were not present at the Bimbilla press conference, but their leaders received the NASU position quite well, even though they were reluctant to put their confidence in the district administration and particularly in the District Chief Executive, who had openly supported the Chamba chief two months earlier.

For some days, tensions seemed to subside, until on 9 January, police at a Bimbilla roadblock intercepted guns and ammunition in a Konkomba truck. When the Nanumba North District Chief Executive told the national press that the war had already started, the small Konkomba community in Bimbilla took to their heels and fled. But nothing happened and after three days, the refugees returned, most with a smile on their faces as a combination of shame (for their fear) and relief. As sudden as tensions had started in Nanun, they subsided altogether to give way to a normalcy which I have found so difficult to assess.

It was in this context that NAYA and KOYA executives finally came down to Nanun, to show their faces in a public conference in Lungni town south of Wulensi on 14 January. However, as I later learned, in a subsequent closed door meeting in a Bimbilla restaurant, the actual reason of the Youth visit to Nanun became clear, as they received a budget and vehicle from the two DCEs in order to organise the joint peace education tour. This tour took place two weeks later, after I had just left the field, and telephone reports suggested that the communities they visited, including Chamba, endured this mission with resignation. The students were surprised how quickly they earned the moral authority from both the people on the streets and from government executives, and how quickly Youth Association executives, who were described as ‘big men in Accra’, lost theirs. The apparent loss of the Youth Associations’ authority was demonstrated a few months later.

### The ‘renewed commitments’, 2007

The following events took place after I left Nanun in mid-January 2007 and I have had to follow them at a distance. While this seriously handicapped my analysis, I decided to include a description of the events to be able to wrap up the Chamba dispute. Not only the Youth Associations but NGOs too, CECOTAPS in particular, were absent during the Christmas break tensions. While he already considered the Chamba dispute a steppingstone for Nanun peace at large, Aidan told me that he found the problems in Chamba even bigger than he anticipated and because CECOTAPS had financial constraints, it had stopped mediation until further notice.

GHANEP, the umbrella organisation for NGOs working in the field of peace-building, had not been silent of course: Their executive’s speech in Bimbilla about the dangers of rumouring and the need for dialogue and tolerance resonated in many subsequent speeches. Additionally, Ghana’s Jubilee stimulated the West Africa and Ghana Networks for Peace-building (WANEP and GHANEP) to facilitate a meeting with the delegates of the seven ethnic communities which had achieved the Kumasi Accord eleven years earlier. On 8 February, President Kufuor had given his annual State of the Nation Address, in which he indirectly

alluded to the Chamba tensions. In his speech, he rallied the participation of citizens in his development policies ‘in an atmosphere of peace and security’, and he made a special appeal to chiefs to resolve all disputes ‘with recourse to the law’.<sup>47</sup> So whereas CECOTAPS had parked the chieftaincy dispute with ‘the government’, Kufuor bounced it back to the chiefs.

This limbo was addressed a few months later in the GHANEP/WANEP workshop. On 2 and 3 August 2007, the WANEP staff Emmanuel Bombande, the GHANEP executive Zakaria and 47 participants signed an update on the Kumasi Accord.<sup>48</sup> For years, but especially since the Chamba tensions, many educated Konkomba and Nanumba had called for such a written down recommitment to the peace accord. This shows that texts are higher valued than oral statements in Nanun, a tendency I summarised in the ‘book no lie’ adage in chapter one. Students and politicians, who had dominated the peace meetings, were not included in the workshop.

Although tolerance was a key word in the speech of the GHANEP executive at the Nanumba Students Union durbar in Bimbilla analysed above, the commitments stimulated dialogue for consensus rather than dialogue for tolerance. In the preamble, the undersigned confirmed their dedication to the dialogue started in 1996 but, other than in the Kumasi Accord which had tried to empower the ethnic communities to create their own security, they called human security and peace ‘the fundamental responsibility of the Government of Ghana’. This change has to be understood in the context of a development discourse which gave new vigour to the nation-state as the responsible agent for development and security (see chapter four).<sup>49</sup> After the preamble, three ‘renewed commitments’ followed, respectively between Konkomba and Nanumba, Gonja and Nawuri and on Dagbon.

The commitments between Konkomba and Nanumba delegations consisted of three clauses in terms of chieftaincy and land: One ascertained that ‘the princes and leaders of Nanung [...] work assiduously to achieve a compromised solution’ in the Bimbilla chieftaincy dispute, while another amended clause five of the Kumasi Accord that the Bimbilla Naa allodial title to land is not only accepted by Konkomba but ‘by all ethnic groups in the traditional area’, so as to take away any suspicion that only Konkomba were excluded from land titles. These agreements were intended to restore the sovereignty of Nanumba chiefs.

The key clause for Konkomba/Nanumba relationships was however one addressing the issue of Konkomba headmen, to achieve consensus by coupling

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<sup>47</sup> ‘State of the Nation Address. 8th February 2007’; available at <http://www.myjoyonline.com>.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Engaging in dialogue to sustain peace in the Northern Region in Ghana’s Golden Jubilee Year’, available at [www.g-rap.org/docs/RAO%20narr%202007/WANEP%20narr%202007-Q3&4.pdf](http://www.g-rap.org/docs/RAO%20narr%202007/WANEP%20narr%202007-Q3&4.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Emmanuel H. Bombande (05-02-2008) ‘Narrative Report’, available at [www.g-rap.org/docs/RAO%20narr%202007/WANEP%20narr%202007-Q3&4.pdf](http://www.g-rap.org/docs/RAO%20narr%202007/WANEP%20narr%202007-Q3&4.pdf).

‘continuous education of both Konkomba and Nanumba youth in Nanung on the letter and spirit of the Kumasi peace accord’ to the establishment of ‘a consultative forum [...] to clearly define the process and criteria for selecting and enskinning [sic] Konkomba leaders/chiefs.’. So while the delegates seemed to acknowledge that the eleven-year-old agreement was largely unknown to the general public, they also recognised that Konkomba leadership procedures were shrouded in confusion and hence required codification. However, the clause remained vague about the relation or distinction between ‘selecting’ and ‘enskinning’ and ‘leaders’ and ‘chiefs’, as well as about the form of such a consultative forum; the controversy about the power of decision in such cases is likely to continue.

## Conclusion

This book’s main line of thought is that if Konkomba and Nanumba find their rights as equal citizens or as autochthons, violated by the other, their intra-ethnic divisions, mostly in terms of modernization, tend to be eclipsed by ethnically divisive mutual victimhood. The Chamba case showed how a local dispute between and among Konkomba and Nanumba alternated between what Lonsdale called internal moral ethnicity and external political tribalism.

Moreover, the dispute showed that the main conflict issues between Konkomba and Nanumba still had the capacity to render their inter-ethnic relations tense and that these tensions hardly generated dialogue, except in the closed door meeting of students, but mostly led to a non-dialogue coupled to speeches or petitions of spokesmen claiming the authority to represent their ethnic communities. Such representations had a legalistic character because the spokesmen or petitioners wanted to provide evidence, usually to state security agencies, of the violated rights of their ethnic communities, as autochthons or as equal citizens. This legalistic format, which as Wilson & Mitchell showed (see chapter one), produced a communicative strategy of silence and authoritative speech, one which Assefa wanted to stop in 1995.

The abundance, variety and complexity of the events studied in this chapter defy simple conclusions, which also conflate with the general conclusions in the next chapter. I focus here on the relationship between autochthony and sovereignty in the decisions made in the dispute. It may be helpful to recapitulate the main decisions in the dispute.

In 1998, the new chief of Chamba invited the acting Konkomba leader in town (Nyilyar) and told him that he should nominate a candidate for him to give his blessings to. Nyilyar became the candidate with a mandate from the Konkomba ‘earth priest’ and the elders of most Konkomba clan communities in town but in spite of his own aspirations (he wanted to be a farmer). The Chamba chief gave

his blessings to him. However, Biligban, the main advisor to the previous leader, did not agree to this decision and between 1998 and 2002, he in vain sought an overrule from the Chamba Naa, the Nanumba Traditional Council and High Court, while the District Security Council froze the dispute and pressed the chief to exercise his sovereignty in the case. In August 2002, the Chamba Naa thereupon installed Biligban, not just as a headman but as one of his sub-chiefs.

Consequently, many local Konkomba considered this imposition a Nanumba attempt to divide and rule them and they marched to the chief's palace fully armed, only to be stopped by the local Konkomba Youth Association chairman. He reported the case to the Youth Association headquarters in Saboba, and Konkomba Youth Association executives petitioned the Regional Security Council that Konkomba citizenship rights and the peace accord were violated. Nanumba Youth Association executives wrote a reply in which they stipulated that Konkomba were subjects of Nanumba chiefs according to the Kumasi Accord. After one meeting between the Youth Associations, mediated by the Regional Administration, the dispute fizzled out and returned to a local silence. In this period, the Chamba Naa tolerated Nyilyar as the Konkomba leader, while Biligban sat in a mostly empty palace.

After more than two years of status quo, a peace-building initiative from the Catholic Relief Services and USAID organized a series of peace workshops with delegates (youth, elders and women) of the chief and both Konkomba contestants, resulting in a declaration that the chief of Chamba would suspend his sovereignty and accept any Konkomba resolution in town, provided it was mediated by the Konkomba 'earth priest'. This mediation resulted in a status quo again.

However, this peace-building initiative parked the (male) chieftaincy case and instead focused on women and development to take away the seed-beds of conflict in town. But the market controversy, added to the abattoir case, showed the entanglement of development issues with the chieftaincy dispute. This became clear when the chief's suspended the market in town. Because the District Chief Executive and DISEC, of which he was the chairman, backed the chief, many Konkomba felt betrayed by local government and the security agencies and moreover, Konkomba revolts to the boycott were considered to be illegal. Simmering Nanumba thoughts that Chamba was an unsafe town were ignited when the chief died.

DISEC played a central role in trying to prevent a violent conflict by increasing security measures and by first empowering Konkomba and Nanumba chiefs and elders and second, as chiefs and elders remained passive, by supporting student initiatives to dialogue. The Youth Associations were strikingly absent. As Konkomba students aired the injustices of Konkomba in Chamba, DCEs drew a distinction between development and security issues, which would be handled by

the District Administration and DISEC, and chieftaincy issues, which had to be handled outside government reach, by reference to the Kumasi Accord. Nanumba students agreed to this.

Finally, the Ghana Network for Peace-building, the heir of the NGO Consortium, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Ghana's Independence with a peace workshop in Kumasi where most erstwhile participants committed themselves to the Kumasi Accord and dedicated themselves to a consultative forum to codify the procedures of choosing Konkomba headmen. But with the Nanumba Traditional Council at a standstill due to the Bimbilla chieftaincy dispute and the lack of a Nanumba paramount chief, such a consultative forum appears to have been postponed.

A sense of being the victim of the other's illegal action is the hinge point between internal divisions and external ethnic rigidity. A prominent Konkomba in Chamba commented on Konkomba chieftaincy in Nanun in the following words: 'It spoils us but we need it'. Many Konkomba I spoke to in Chamba were very unhappy with the dispute and with the behaviour of the contestants; however, this assessment could easily slide into blaming 'the Nanumba' for, in the words of one interlocutor, 'banging our heads together'. From the Nanumba point of view, few chiefs were as controversial as the Chamba Naa was, especially due to his role in the Bimbilla succession dispute, and many were very critical of his role in the Chamba dispute. However, this assessment could also slide into blaming 'the Konkomba' for failing to pay the due respect to this very chief. Although only the suspected violation of rights seemed to have had the capacity to trigger violence, such victimhood was embedded in the wider context of moral detestation, i.e. the general Nanumba theory that Konkomba abused their hospitality versus the Konkomba notion that Nanumba used their autochthony to denigrate settlers.

The Chamba case showed how Konkomba leadership in Chamba developed into a Konkomba/Nanumba conflict because both sides found the others' activities illegal, rather than just morally detestable. In this process, we saw how spokesmen claimed the authority of ethnic representation, of authoritative speech, notably KOYA and NAYA in 2002, but also how these Youth Associations lost a significant portion of their authority to students in 2006. In other words, a legalistic discourse brings along a social structure in which entire communities refer to the petitions or speeches of whom they consider to be their representatives in phrasing their injustices. In such a situation, as seen especially in 2002 but also in 2006, their authorities do not 'sit together' to seek compromise, but rather make their legalistic statements. Whereas Assefa mistrusted such elitism, this chapter showed how students were forced into such a position against their will (see also the next chapter).

While the peace agreements seemed to have successfully taken the legal sting out of earth sacrifices and elections, this chapter showed how traditional rule, rather than having an intrinsic sovereignty and being a source of peace-building (cf. Assefa 1996; Voorhoeve 2007: 20), continued to invoke Konkomba and Nanumba theories of injustices, both among and between them. When Assefa and his team argued that traditions in northern Ghana were still strong and intact and they erroneously equated customary law to tradition, they overlooked the hand of the state, both colonial and post-colonial, in bolstering such traditions into a bundle of contradictions. While they aspired to restoring an intrinsic sovereignty, most people in Nanun awaited external state decisions and lined up behind authorities who petitions to that end.

The Chamba dispute revolved around the power of decision of the chief in town. Did he have the right, as the landowner, to install an unpopular Konkomba candidate as his sub-chief and did he have the right to suspend the market for three weeks? The Konkomba majority did not think he had the right to do so and considered his interventions illegal, while the chief and many Nanumba considered this Konkomba rejection illegal. While representatives of both sides petitioned the district and regional security agencies for countering such illegal actions, they reacted by temporarily freezing decisions for security reasons and a non-intervention.

The neutrality of these agencies however implied an explicit categorization of the dispute in the realm of traditional rule, in which Nanumba chiefs were sovereign as landowners. In 2006, the DCE and DISEC initially backed the development and security decisions of the Chamba chief, rather than those of the elected Assembly member, thereby exacerbating Konkomba interpretations that their citizenship rights were secondary to their subject position to chiefs. While the DCEs and Ministers of State renounced the chief's interventions, it will take a lot of effort to remove the widespread disappointment of especially Konkomba in the local government. The latest tensions emanating from Chamba suggest that procedures of electing and recognizing Konkomba headmen require not so much more codification, as proposed in the Renewed Commitments, but rather a consideration of the very place of such Konkomba leadership in Nanumba chieftaincy and the relationship between the 'modern' and 'traditional' forms of government in Ghana.

Nanun has endured two very serious tests to its peace. When in the past conflicts, state agencies failed to live up to the local expectations to solve this violation, petitions for a state intervention drowned in vigilante violence. Why didn't this happen in 2002 or 2007? Put negatively, perhaps violence did not occur because there was no guinea fowl incident to ignite the tensions or put more optimistically, most interlocutors told me that they were 'fed up' with

fighting. Most interlocutors coupled fear for violence to the recognition of a pledge of non-violence in Kumasi, even though few of them knew the exact contents of this peace deal. A third explanation may be that security agencies were much more actively present during the Chamba tensions than during the tensions which resulted in the past violent conflicts. The police prohibition of a soccer match between the Bimbilla and Chamba teams may symbolise this vigour. But however auspicious this non-violence may be, the mechanisms triggering previous episodes of violence have not been cleared. In the past, feeling victimized by the others' illegal action, bolstered in conspiracy theories and coupled to a sense of betrayal by the state, first rendered Nanun silent and then extremely violent. In that sense, the current calm in Chamba may continue to be ominous.

## Conclusion

### Introduction

After addressing the themes and questions from the introduction in the previous five chapters, we can now draw conclusions about the different forms of autochthony and citizenship equality discourses (rights or stereotypes) and processes of depoliticization in relation to violence. Below, I start with some considerations about drawings conclusions as such, followed by a brief synopsis of the argumentation in this study, based on the double Konkomba/Nanumba meanings of peace as calm and unity, and finish with analytical thoughts about the move from consensus to compromise in the pursuit of Konkomba/Nanumba peace.

### Considerations for concluding

In chapter one, I quoted Eltringham's argument that because conflict is about disagreement, scholars of conflict should give voice to such disagreements and show confusion rather than sanitized truths, also because I feared that my future analytical representations would become a reference of scholarly evidence in Konkomba and Nanumba legalistic petitions, just like the work of Tait and Skalník. It was significant that my possible scholarly authority seemed to be tied to my future texts rather than my presence in the field; this was most tangible in the Christmas tensions described in chapter six, when I felt neutrality actually imposed on me.

In chapter one I argued that when my interlocutors said that they could not wait to read my book, this flatter was eclipsed by my doubts about my expertise and nervousness about what local leadership would use my findings for. While most people I worked with thought that my research would reveal ‘the facts’, my work was about dismantling such ontological aspirations and trying to represent the ways in which facts fractured. But I am worried that my message for the people in Nanun, that there is no straightforward solution for their conflict, but rather an overwhelming contingency of voices, silences, disagreements, suspicions and misrepresentations, will disappoint many interlocutors.

My consent with Eltringham’s line of thought notwithstanding, I have found its application very cumbersome. I had to understand the general patterns and threads before dissolving them in my material’s inconsistencies or contradictions. Retrospectively, I seem to have come only halfway of this trajectory. My research often went in opposite directions: Trying to understand what was going on and seeking consistencies, while simultaneously looking at the pieces that did not fit.

## Synopsis

These considerations made it difficult to draw straightforward conclusions. Let’s therefore recapitulate the main findings chapter by chapter. In chapter one, I posed the question, through the soccer match case, whether there was peace in Nanun. The match confronted me with an eerie calm which resonated with one of two Konkomba and Nanumba definitions of peace (*nsudoon* or *sodoo*), but not with the other definition (unity; *kimòkbaan* or *nangbanjini*). Whence this calm? It was certainly conflict avoidance, in the meaning given to it by Assefa, who called such pretences of tranquillity inauthentic. However, anthropologists such as Tait and Skalník have rather shown that such calm, as symbolised by the soccer match, has been a typical manifestation of inter-ethnic reserve in this part of Ghana (see chapter one).

The deliberate abstinence from provocation, tackles and insults, which are characteristic for soccer matches in this part of the world (and probably beyond), certainly attested to a certain type of conflict avoidance, but I have tried to show that this calm was eclipsed by a silence-generating legalistic discourse between Konkomba and Nanumba. The soccer match, from this point of view, was an improper site for invoking the issues at stake between them. The core in this interpretation is that both Konkomba and Nanumba seemed to acknowledge the possibility of a future occasion on which these issues could be addressed and clarified to such an extent that they would allow for unity in Nanun. In sum, most Konkomba and Nanumba I spoke to evaluated their peace as halfway between calm and unity.

Aspirations to unity have been explicitly phrased in the Kumasi Accord agreements between them. As I showed in chapter one, the twelve clauses in the Accord roughly split in two halves between clauses ensuring the prevention of violence as a way of addressing conflict issues and clauses consensually solving the conflict issues. By its own standards, then, the calm in Nanun, which I found symbolically represented in the soccer match, testified to the success of the former set of agreements and the failure of the second set. While Konkomba/Nanumba relationships have been non-violent since 1996, consensus about the key issues and their solutions has been drowned in lack of consensus and consequently in a silence-generating legalistic authoritative speech or petitioning.

Taking this silence into consideration, we should ask how feasible such a consensual unity is. While the peace mediators in the Kumasi workshops aspired to the restoration of a pre-conflict unity around consensual traditions, I have deconstructed such representations in chapter two. In this study I have tried to show that rather than producing security, the fiction of consensus and its aspiration to it often triggered disappointment when it appeared to be out of reach. Such disappointment has more than once slid into suspicion and even violence. Let's look at a synopsis of the analysis for clarifying this point.

In order to understand the calm in Nanun, I have analytically linked debates of autochthony, violence and sovereignty, peace-building and legalistic discourses. To address this question, we have taken a long trajectory through five chapters. Chapter two showed that although Konkomba and Nanumba coexistence may have always been shaped in terms of moral judgments or clichés about each other (feudal Nanumba or Konkomba bush people), it was a legal clash between registers of rights based on autochthony and rights based on citizenship majority, first about Konkomba self-arbitration and after that about the Konkomba rights of free settlement in Nanun, which forced their cohabitation in a strenuous legalistic straitjacket of seemingly rigid ethnic opposition or political tribalism after 1979.

In chapter three, we saw how these issues took specific forms, or tropes (Geschiere & Jackson, see chapter one), of violence and a silence-generating authoritative and legalistic petitions, drawing heavily on moral judgments of mutual exploitation – Konkomba abusing Nanumba hospitality and Nanumba imposing feudal chiefs on Konkomba – which alone were insufficient to trigger violence. Rather, violence burst out as Konkomba and Nanumba took the law into their own hands to counter what they considered to be violations of their constitutional rights.

Chapters four to six were critical examinations of the post-Peace Accord situation forms of addressing the conflict themes. Chapters four and five showed that prior to the Peace Accord, some Nanumba tried to prevent Konkomba from

casting their votes while some Konkomba performed sacrifices at Nanumba earth shrines. Judging from scholarship, I expected that the marks of autochthony and majority – the earth shrine and the polling station – would generate tensions and explicit acts to demonstrate either position. But quite on the contrary, since 1996, Nanumba have not tried to subvert the marks of Konkomba citizenship majority (polling stations), and that Konkomba have not challenged the marks of Nanumba autochthony (earth shrines), in spite of moral judgments: Many Nanumba found Konkomba immature voters but did not contest their right to vote, while many Konkomba considered Nanumba lousy landowners but did not contest their title.

The headmen controversy depicted in chapter six showed that not Konkomba citizenship or Nanumba autochthony as such generated tensions, but rather a (perceived) clash between these two sets of rights and the power of decision, drawn from autochthony or citizen majority, to overrule one register of rights. While accepting Nanumba chieftaincy and the necessity to have their leadership blessed by Nanumba chiefs, many Konkomba did not accept the power of decision of such chiefs to refuse their candidate. For most Nanumba, on the contrary, this Konkomba refusal corrupted the fundamental rule in their chieftaincy, namely that each title is an award or privilege. This controversy was not resolved by the Kumasi Accord but rather exacerbated by it, because representatives from both sides referred to clause two in order to cast their claims.

In the Chamba dispute, especially in 2002, ethnic spokesmen, both Konkomba and Nanumba, referred to clause two of the Kumasi Accord, but they gave different readings of the clause. While Konkomba Youth stressed the right of free choice of Konkomba as Ghanaian citizens, Nanumba Youth emphasised that such choice had to be in the interest of Nanumba chiefs, who embodied Nanumba tradition. In this situation we saw the limits of consensus: While Konkomba and Nanumba agreed on the Nanumba traditional privileges and on the equal Konkomba rights as citizens, the issue of headmen – a novelty in Nanumba chieftaincy – seemed to straddle both registers. Compromise may be the only way ahead.

## Silence and lack of consensus

The Chamba case illustrated a peace in which people in Nanun neither used violence nor sat together to talk their contentions out. While the Kumasi Accord helped prevent violence in Nanun, Assefa called such a truce of non-violence a ‘negative peace’ so long as it failed to achieve consensus about the conflict issues. But how negative is such a peace? Before elaborating on that, let’s first look at the reasons why consensus about the conflict issues has failed in Nanun.

First, only Nanumba traditions were recognised. On the whole, the peace deal is very ethnic, which may come as a surprise considering that both Konkomba and Nanumba are citizens and subjects and that Nanumba autochthony has a high tendency to fragment in smaller pieces than ethnicity (see chapter five). The prominent ethnic character of the Accord already suggests how closely Nanumba ethnicity and traditions are entwined. As seen throughout this study, Nanumba have constantly been divided internally about their traditions, which are far from straightforward and consensual – for example about eligibility to paramount chieftaincy – while such moral ethnicity has the potential to slip over to a legalistic political tribalism, as we saw in the Chamba dispute. Nanumba traditions are unlikely to produce consensus.

Second, as Assefa explicitly placed the Nanun peace in the realm of tradition, which he considered to be strong and intact and away from the disruptions of modern political competition. His representation of tradition resonated with what Hansen & Stepputat recently called ‘intrinsic sovereignty’ or a Durkheimian collective ethos which motivated everyday life. Such a theory, that if you follow tradition you will know what to do, clashes with an acceptance that sovereignty was externalised, as in the work of Schmitt but also of Skalník. When Assefa claimed that traditions in northern Ghana were still strong and intact and he equated customary law to tradition, he overlooked the hand of the state, both colonial and post-colonial, in bolstering such traditions into a bundle of contradictions. While Assefa argued that a small elite (Youth Associations) had tried to politicize and therefore ravaged traditions, but that traditions had survived in the communities and among the voices of reason, he overlooked the reality that youth had not only claimed but also often received the modernist authority from their people to make and break traditions. When Assefa called for infusing traditions with the positive elements of modernity, he actually repeated the Youth Associations agenda. But by excluding the Youth from this infusing and rather focusing on the changes bubbling up from the grassroots, it remained unclear who had the moral authority to infuse traditions.

This brings us to a related third point. Assefa thought that talking heals and that calm is pathological. While I have certainly appreciated this point, free speech between Konkomba and Nanumba on the issues which divided them is a fiction. Assefa namely presumed that knowledge was free, hence his selection of the ‘voices of reason’, but these ‘voices’ became authorities in their villages. Sixty odd years earlier, Amherst, the colonial officer who wrote the Nanumba constitution for the purpose of introducing British indirect rule in Nanun, was already confronted with the silence, secrecy and ambiguity of his Nanumba interlocutors. In sum, the idea that once consensus has been reached, each and every Konkomba and Nanumba would be able to freely talk about their previous

issues of contention may be attractive for peace-builders but not realistic if epistemology and authority are as interwoven as in Nanun.

However, even if Nanumba traditions may not be so consensual and self-explanatory as the mediation team thought they were, Konkomba and Nanumba delegates agreed that Nanumba owned their traditions and that Konkomba would abide by them. The controversy however emerged when it came to demarcating the confines of the Nanumba traditions, especially when Konkomba considered them to clash with their citizenship rights, as the Chamba dispute illustrated. It is in this very lack of consensus about the exact validity of customary law and modern law that we have to place the obsession with external sovereign decisions, to suspend one register of rights for the application of another.

While a future consultative forum about the codification of headmen selection procedures may certainly clarify some difficulties, it is likely to ignore the overriding controversy: Whether the locus of headmen titles is within or without Nanumba chieftaincy. The constitutional set-up of Ghana seems to allow no other categories. Although Konkomba leadership chosen by councils of elders do not seem to fit in either, they have been placed in the realm of Nanumba tradition, both by the NGO Consortium and subsequent NGO initiatives and, through their non-intervention, by most state agencies including DISEC. However, this traditional realm has been demarcated by the state, often drawing on colonial constructions. Whether or not they are a viable structure in Ghana's political system is a different question, but certainly, chieftaincy is not original or authentic and in that sense, the consensus to which the renewed commitments aspired may be a dead-end.

But what are the consequences of such a lack of consensus or unity? According to the Kumasi peace workshops, lack of consensus was tantamount to lack of trust, and hence insecurity, and lack of cooperation as 'brothers in development', and hence deprivation. In the paradigm of Assefa, which he implemented in the peace process, security and development in Nanun could only bubble up from healthy, reconciled relationships ('full of energy and differences') based on consensus about the root causes of the conflict, and ways to solve them, between Konkomba and Nanumba. For Assefa, therefore, peace, security and development were intertwined; consider his description of the Kumasi peace workshops as 'consultations on development'. Without unity, security measures would be coercive and development programmes divisive. The value of an integrative approach to peace, development and security has been exemplified by the Chamba dispute, namely how quickly alleged technocratic development and security interventions were drowned in the headmen controversy.

In any case, consensus, depoliticization and a legalistic discourse seem to go hand in hand. My data suggests that the denial of politics in tradition or in local

government has the potential to generate sentiments of victimhood, based on theories that one's rights are violated by illegal actions of the other, while political competition seems to take the sting out of the disappointment that there is no consensus in Nanun.<sup>1</sup> Although Konkomba in Chamba seemed to suffer most from such depoliticization – many Nanumba instantly considered Konkomba objections to the locus of headmen in Nanumba tradition and the exclusion of 'their' (Konkomba) Assembly member from crucial local government decisions to be illegal – the denial of politics affected Nanumba too, when they chiefs and kingmakers used tradition as a cloak in the Bimbilla dispute or when the unpopular DCE said that he was the government. In the shadows of peace agreements, which regularly triggered tensions when politics popped up where it allegedly should not and when residents of Nanun had to like each other against their will, political competition and moral disapproval may have produced a peace which appears to be pretty robust. You don't have to agree in order to live in peace. How does this relate to the soccer match metaphor?

### Disagreements but no violence: Back to the soccer match

The calls for a decision in the Chamba case have brought back the silence-generating legalistic forms of communication, especially petitions, which Assefa and his team hoped to have solved by the Kumasi Accord, because they hindered the peace. Throughout this book however, we have constantly seen how tensions about victimhood, which motivated previous outbreaks of violence, blew over leaving mutual stereotypes. While this moral realm certainly remains a source of conflict, as the latest outbreak of tensions suggest, such stereotypes are equally a source of ethnic fragmentation. The best examples of this process were Konkomba assessments that Nanumba were more politically skilled which resembled Nanumba self-images of political maturity but also that their leadership was politicized; and the Nanumba images of Konkomba as immature and primitive bush people which came somewhat close to Konkomba self-images as a naive people (see chapters four and five).

This point invites to briefly considering a theme for future research: Tolerance. While the concept of tolerance featured in several speeches during the Christmas tensions, these were little more than a shorthand for 'unity in diversity'. Concomitant with the transfer of issues from rights to moral disapproval seems to be, as demonstrated in chapter five, a shift from a political to divine sovereignty to counter illegal behaviour. We have seen that both Konkomba and Nanumba recognised the sovereignty of earth spirits in a locality and tolerated

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<sup>1</sup> On an important side-note which requires more research, I was struck by the general faith of Konkomba and Nanumba in the judiciary, which, contrary to the legislative and executive powers, has a profound image of neutrality.

poor behaviour of the other, because they considered it to be a matter between him and God or the earth spirits.

In the end, this seems to be the message of the soccer match between the Nanumba Nationals from Bimbilla and the Chamba Soccer Heroes; that in spite of disagreements and disapprovals, two teams felt secure to voluntarily play a match without any threat of violent escalation. The students, who wanted to repeat this match during the Christmas break tensions, were very much aware that the match symbolised a certain peace between Konkomba and Nanumba, which its playing would demonstrate. DISEC first mistrusted the peace in this match and banned it for security reasons, while a week later, the Committee used it for its own peace-keeping ends. Although the chairman of DISEC, the DCE, even presented a cup which the teams would have to compete for, latest telephone reports from Nanun suggested that neither during Christmas 2007 nor during Christmas 2008, was such a match played. The reason for this, apparently, was that such a staged match lacked the voluntary intentions to play in spite of disagreements. Such matches may symbolize an ominous calm in Nanun rather than resolve it, but they may also contribute to an auspicious coexistence in Nanun. It is therefore to be hoped that such voluntary soccer matches will be played again.

# Annexes

## Orthography

In this study I use the names Konkomba and Nanumba for scholarly consistency. Konkomba and Nanumba speaking English use these names, but Nanumba speak of themselves as Nanuŋba (sg. Nanuŋa), while Konkomba call them Binanuŋ (sg. Unanuŋja). Konkomba call themselves Bikpakpaln (sg. Ukpakpalnja), while Nanumba call them Kpuŋpaŋba (sg. Kpuŋpaŋa).

For an overview of language clusters in Nanun and adjacent areas, see Naden (1988). The question whether Nanunli (NAN) is a language of its own or a dialect of Dagbanli has not been resolved. I found the two tongues to be very similar, with some conjugations and plural forms in Nanunli different from Dagbanli and a small set of words in use which are alien to Dagbanli. Unless specified otherwise, my spelling in this study is congruent with that of Dagbanli (Mahama 2003b; Sulley 2000; TICCS 2002) and may differ from the spellings of Skalník and colonial officer Amherst.

The internal differences in Likpakpaln (LIK) are much bigger than that between Dagbanli and Nanunli and some Konkomba had difficulty understanding each other (e.g. my assistant and some of our interlocutors). In this study I use the standardised spelling of Likpakpaln (as in Ghana Institute of Language, Literacy and Bible Translation (1983) and Langdon & Breeze 1981). This spelling is based on the Lichaborl dialect spoken in and around Saboba and differs from that of Tait and the French ethnographer Froelich. I have made use of the common Dagbanli and Likpakpaln alphabets; ŋ is pronounced ng as in ‘sing’ and γ as a throaty ‘r’ as in the French ‘très’ (cf. Piot 1999).

## Acronyms

AA	All Africa (online news portal)
Ag	Acting
AI	The Ashanti Independent (newspaper)
BNI	Bureau of National Investigation
CCNT	Chief Commissioner Northern Territories (colonial)
CECOTAPS	Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies
CPP	Convention People's Party
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CS	Colonial Secretary (colonial)
CSP	Commissioner Southern Province (colonial)
DA	District Assembly
DC	District Commissioner (colonial)
DCE	District Chief Executive
DG	Daily Graphic (newspaper)
DISEC	District Security Council
DK	Deutsches Kolonialblatt (German Colonial Journal)
DPO	District Political Officer (colonial)
DSP	District Superintendent of Police
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GC	Ghanaian Chronicle (newspaper)
GHANEP	Ghana Network for Peace-Building
GILLBT	Ghana Institute of Language, Literacy and Bible Translation
Gongong IV	Military Task Force
GT	Ghanaian Times (newspaper)
GV	The Ghanaian Voice (newspaper)
GW	Ghana Web (online news portal)
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KOBASU	Konkomba-Bassari Students Union
KOYA	Konkomba Youth Association
MFGS	Mitteilungen von Forschungsreisenden und Gelehrten aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten (Research Proceedings from German Protectorates)

MP	Member of Parliament
NASU	Nanumba Students Union
NAYA	Nanumba Youth Association
NDA	Nanumba District Assembly
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNDA	Nanumba North District Assembly
NPI	Nairobi Peace Initiative
NPP	Northern People's Party; New Patriotic Party
NRC	National Reconciliation Commission
NT	Northern Territories of the Gold Coast (colonial)
NTC	Nanumba Traditional Council
PDCs	People's Defence Committees
PNC	People's National Convention
PPNT	Permanent Peace Negotiation Team
PRAAD	Public Records and Archives Administration Department
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
REGSEC	Regional Security Council
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
TRC	South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WA	West Africa (magazine)
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peace-Building

## Glossary

Afanima (sg. afa)	NAN	Muslims
Amasachina	NAN (Hausa)	Youth
Asòre	Twi	Anti-witchcraft shrine (literally 'church')
Banyili	NAN	Nanumba chieftaincy gate (literally 'house of the bangle')
Bikpakpaan (sg. Ukpakpalnja)	LIK	Konkomba
Bikpakpaan aamòkbaan	LIK	Konkomba Youth Association (literally 'Konkomba unity')
Bikpakpaan aatindaan	LIK	Konkomba earth priest
Bikpakpaannyon	LIK	Konkomba Market (in Accra)
Bimbilla Naa	NAN	Nanumba paramount chief (literally 'Bimbilla chief')
Bikpanpalb	LIK	Chiefs' elders
Buyli	NAN	Earth shrine
Chaamininkpel	LIK	Chief's elder (from Twi <i>òchaame</i> )
Chabob	LIK	Saboba
Dan	NAN	Clan
Dibu	NAN	Chop (euphemism for corruption)
Do	LIK	Place indicator
Dogim	NAN	Lineage
Dondo	NAN	War drum
Fara	NAN	Poverty
Fufu		Staple of mashed yams
Gacaca		Village tribunals in Rwanda
Gbugmayili	NAN	Nanumba chieftaincy gate (literally 'house of the lion')
Gongong	Twi	Announcement bell
Igiin	LIK	Poverty
Jabun	LIK	Protective ancestral shrine
Ji	LIK	Chop (euphemism for corruption)
Kali	NAN	Tradition
Kambonsi	NAN	Warriors
Kidabuk	LIK	Single barrel gun

Kijaak	LIK	Communal violence
Kikpakpaan	LIK	Konkomba land
Kimòkbaan	LIK	Peace (literally ‘unity’)
Kimòkpaanyaab	LIK	Peace-builders (literally ‘peace people’)
Kininkpòkpòk	LIK	Quarrel
Kitork	LIK	Sacrifice
Kòfie	Twì	Market festival
Kom bayibu	NAN	Libation of water
Kòtini	Pidgin English	Popular name for Nanumba Traditional Council
Kpema (pl. kpamba)	NAN	Elder
Kper	LIK	Libation (literally ‘pour’)
Kpungkpaam kpema	NAN	Konkomba elder
Likpakpaaln	LIK	Konkomba language
Linampal	LIK	Homeland (literally ‘home’)
Linampal aatingbaln	LIK	Homeland earth shrine
Liluul	LIK	Poison
Litingbaln	LIK	Earth shrine
Litingbalwaal	LIK	Earth shrine spirit
Lunsi	NAN	Tom-tom beaters
Magasia	NAN (Hausa)	Women leaders
Maligu	NAN	Sacrifice
Naa (pl. Naanima)	NAN	Chief
Naabihi (sg. Naabia)	NAN	Princes (literally ‘chief’s children’)
Naakpamba	NAN	Kingmakers (literally ‘chief’s elders’)
Naakuli	NAN	Funeral of the chief
Naam	NAN	Chieftaincy
Naawuni	NAN	God
Nangbanyini	NAN	Peace (literally ‘unity’)
Nanun	NAN	Nanumba land
Ndipòòndaan	LIK	Beer festival (literally ‘new sorghum beer’)
Nkaal	LIK	Tradition
Nnyok	LIK	Medicine
Nsudoon	LIK	Peace (literally ‘calm’)

Nuli dibu	NAN	Yam harvesting festival (literally 'yam eating')
Nyiin	LIK	Protective ancestral shrine
Pito		Sorghum beer
Polatisi	Pidgin English	Politics
Sabli (pl. saba)	NAN	Talismans
Sana (pl. samba)	NAN	Stranger
Singal	Pidgin English	Single barrel gun
Sodoo	NAN	Peace (literally 'calm')
Taremba (sg. tarma)	NAN	Commoner
Tibòrtiib aabor	LIK	Chieftaincy (literally 'chiefs' matters')
Tigari	Twi	Anti-witchcraft shrine
Timantotiib	LIK	Ritually obliged lineages
Tinbihi (sg. tinbia)	NAN	Autochthons (literally 'children of the earth')
Tiṅbani	NAN	Earth shrine
Tindana	NAN	Earth priest
Tiyar aasambil	LIK	Pot with sand from earth shrine
Tobu	NAN	Communal violence
Ubòr	LIK	Chief
Uchabobor	LIK	Konkomba paramount chief (literally 'Saboba chief')
Ukpiin	LIK	Announcement horn
Uninkpel (pl. bininkpiib)	LIK	Elder
Utindaan (pl. bitindaam)	LIK	Earth priest
Uwumbòr	LIK	God
Wulana	NAN	Chief's elder
Wuni	NAN	Spirit
Wunlaan	LIK	Chief's elder
Yidana	NAN	Landlord or husband
Zabili	NAN	Quarrel

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## Summary in Dutch

Spanningen tussen autochtonen en immigranten zijn een verontrustend fenomeen in veel delen van de wereld. In een relatief onbekend geval in noordoost Ghana hebben zulke spanningen geleid tot onvoorstelbare etnische zuiveringen tussen autochtonen en een groep immigranten. Hoewel de analyse van deze uitbarstingen veel bijdraagt aan het verkrijgen van inzicht in etnisch geweld, gaat deze studie vooral over de mogelijkheden om vrede te bereiken tussen deze groepen.

Dit speelt zich af tegen de achtergrond van drie episodes van geweld tussen leden van de Konkomba en Nanumba etnische groepen in 1981, 1994 en 1995 in de twee Nanumba districten (die overlappen met het Nanumba Traditioneel Gebied Nanun). Elk van die geweldsuitbarstingen duurde slechts een aantal dagen maar resulteerde in duizenden burgerslachtoffers en ze waren als zodanig de meest intense geweldsuitbarstingen in een overigens relatief vreedzaam land. Een mengelmoes van noodhulpverstreckende organisaties bracht in 1996 een vredesakkoord tot stand tussen vertegenwoordigers van beide groepen. Deze studie gaat vooral over de periode na 1996.

In hoofdstuk 1 stel ik, door de beschrijving van een voetbalwedstrijd, de vraag of er vrede is in Nanun. Deze wedstrijd confronteerde mij namelijk met een gespannen kalmte die overeenkwam met één Konkomba en Nanumba definitie van vrede (respectievelijk *nsudoon* en *sodoo*), maar niet met een tweede definitie (eenheid, ofwel *kimòkbaan* of *nangbanjini*). Vanwaar deze kalmte? Deze kalmte was niet zondermeer conflictontwijkend gedrag, zoals Assefa, die het vredesakkoord tussen Konkomba en Nanumba sloot, stelde. Lang voor Assefa hebben antropologen zoals Tait en Skalník namelijk al laten zien dat een dergelijke vrede, waarvoor de voetbalwedstrijd een metafoor bleek te zijn, juist een typische manifestatie van interetnische relaties in dit deel van Ghana zijn (hoofdstuk 1).

Het opzettelijk afzien van provocaties, zoals de tackles en beledigingen die karakteristiek zijn voor voetbalwedstrijden in dit deel van de wereld (en niet alleen daar), was uiteraard conflictontwijkend gedrag maar ik laat zien dat deze kalmte veeleer het resultaat is van een stiltegenererend legalistisch discours tussen Konkomba en Nanumba. Zo beschouwd was de voetbalwedstrijd een ongeschikte ontmoeting om de onderwerpen van conflict te bespreken. De kern van deze interpretatie is dat zowel Konkomba als Nanumba verwachtten dat er in de toekomst een gelegenheid zal zijn waarin al deze onderwerpen benoemd en opgelost zullen worden en dat er dan pas eenheid in Nanun zal zijn. De meeste

Konkomba en Nanumba die ik sprak plaatsten de huidige ‘vrede’ halverwege tussen kalmte en eenheid.

Het verlangen naar eenheid is expliciet geformuleerd in het Kumasi vredesakkoord dat in 1996 door Konkomba en Nanumba vertegenwoordigers gesloten werd. In hoofdstuk 1 laat ik zien hoe de twaalf clausules van dit akkoord grofweg in twee categorieën uiteenvallen, namelijk clausules die het gebruik van geweld in het conflict tegen gaan en clausules die het conflict door middel van consensus proberen te beëindigen. De huidige kalmte in Nanun, zoals die metaforisch in de voetbalwedstrijd naar voren kwam, toont het succes van de eerste groep clausules aan maar het tekortschieten van de tweede categorie. Hoewel Konkomba/Nanumba relaties sinds 1996 geweldloos zijn geweest, is consensus over de oplossingen voor het conflict overschaduwed door een gebrek aan eenstemmigheid en vervolgens gevat in legalistische vormen van communicatie (autoritaire speeches en petities) die het conflict in het dagelijks leven het zwijgen lijken op te leggen.

We kunnen daarom de vraag stellen hoe realistisch een vrede gebaseerd op consensus of eenheid is. Terwijl externe vredesonderhandelaars zoals Assefa in de Kumasi workshops, die de opmaat waren voor het akkoord, de traditionele eenheid van vóór het conflict probeerden te herstellen, deconstrueer ik deze visie op een traditioneel verleden. Ik toon aan dat deze representatie van consensus en vooral alle pogingen om deze te herstellen geen veiligheid brengen maar omdat deze een fictie is, veeleer teleurstelling teweegbrengen. Meer dan eens heeft een dergelijke teleurstelling geleid tot wantrouwen en zelfs grootschalig etnisch geweld.

Om de kalmte in Nanun te kunnen begrijpen, heb ik in hoofdstuk 1 debatten over autochtonie, geweld en soevereiniteit, vredesopbouw en legalistische discoursen met elkaar in verband gebracht. Hoofdstuk 2 laat zien dat hoewel Konkomba en Nanumba altijd in stereotyperingen over elkaar hebben gesproken (feodale Nanumba of primitieve Konkomba), het juist een modernistische legalistische botsing tussen rechten, aan de ene kant gebaseerd op autochtonie (Nanumba) en aan andere kant op burgerschap (Konkomba) is geweest die aan de grondslag heeft gelegen van de conflicten in 1981 en 1994-1995. De Konkomba roep om autonome arbitrage van hun huwelijksgeschillen gevolgd door het claimen van hun recht op vrije vestiging in Nanun plaatste Konkomba en Nanumba in een dwangbuis van ogenschijnlijk rigide, maar in wezen nieuwe, etnische tegenstellingen.

Hoofdstuk 2 bestudeert het samenleven van Konkomba en Nanumba vanaf het eerste schriftelijke bewijs van hun co-existentie in 1931 tot de eerste uitbarsting van geweld in 1981. In deze vijftig jaar transformeerde Nanun van een afgelegen plek in een Britse mandaatgebied waar nooit iets leek te gebeuren, tot Ghana's

meest gespannen gebied. Dit is een geschiedenis van ontwikkeling, etnische emancipatie and processen van modernisering waarin sommige tradities werden omarmd en andere afgewezen, vanaf het moment waarop een Brits bestuurder klaagde dat Nanumba stil waren en werden gehinderd door taboes tot het moment dat Jeugdbewegingen pretendeerden namens hele etnische groeperingen te spreken. Dit hoofdstuk gaat, met hulp van debatten over burgerschap en autochtonie, over het proces waarin Konkomba en Nanumba zich slachtoffer van het wetteloze gedrag van de ander begonnen te voelen.

In hoofdstuk 3 laat ik zien hoe deze onderwerpen van conflicten specifieke vormen of *tropes* (Geschiere & Jackson 2006) aannamen, namelijk die van geweld en een maatschappelijke stilte in de schaduw van speeches en petities van zogenaamde etnische woordvoerders. Hoewel deze vormen voortbouwden op morele veroordelingen op grond van een wederzijds gevoel van uitbuiting – Konkomba zouden Nanumba gastvrijheid uitbuiten en Nanumba zouden feodale dorpschouwen aanstellen in Konkomba dorpen – waren deze morele gevoelens onvoldoende grond voor geweld. Het grootschalige geweld tussen Konkomba en Nanumba was een poging om de wet in eigen hand te nemen om het veronderstelde grondwetondermijnende en criminele gedrag van de ander een halt toe te roepen. Dit geweld was als zondanig het claimen van soevereiniteit, zeker door de aanvankelijke passiviteit van de overheid. Hoofdstuk 3 zet de chronologie van hoofdstuk 2 voort, van de eerste uitbarsting van geweld in 1981 tot het tekenen van een vredesakkoord in 1996, in een afwisseling van escalatie en de-escalatie. Dit hoofdstuk probeert die afwisseling te duiden, vooral door in te gaan op de relatie tussen stilte en geweld en kijkt naar de gevolgen voor de thema's van verzoening en veiligheid uit het vredesakkoord.

Hoofdstukken 4 tot en met 6 zijn kritische beschouwingen van de vormen die het conflict na het vredesakkoord heeft aangenomen. Hoofdstukken 4 en 5 beschrijven hoe, voor het vredesakkoord werd gesloten, sommige Nanumba probeerden de stembusgang van Konkomba te verhinderen omdat ze als immigranten geen gelijk stemrecht zouden hebben, en hoe sommige Konkomba landrituelen uitvoerden in Nanumba offerplaatsen. Op grond van beschikbare informatie uit West Afrika verwachtte ik dat deze symbolen van autochtonen (de offerplaats voor het land) en van een burgermeerderheid (het stemkantoor) in spanningen gehuld zouden zijn. Mijn materiaal liet echter het tegenovergestelde zien: sinds 1996 hebben Nanumba de stemgang van Konkomba niet meer verhinderd en hebben Konkomba de landoffers van Nanumba niet meer geprobeerd over te nemen, zelfs ook al werden deze onderwerpen aan een morele veroordeling onderworpen. Maar hoewel veel Nanumba Konkomba onvolwassen stemgedrag verweten en veel Konkomba Nanumba onverantwoordelijke landeige-

naren vonden, stelden zij het respectievelijke stemrecht en offerrecht niet ter discussie.

Hoofdstuk 4 gaat in op de impact van ‘moderne’ politiek (zowel wetgevend als uitvoerend) op Konkomba en Nanumba co-existentie. Ik begin daarom met een analyse van de demografische situatie van Nanun en in het bijzonder Chamba en hoe Konkomba daar een electorale meerderheid werden, gevolgd door een studie van de recente electorale en bestuurlijke ontwikkelingen in Nanun. Op een bepaald moment tijdens spanningen, vroeg een Konkomba aan het Nanumba hoofd van Chamba om het uitvoeren van landoffers om de rust te herstellen. Het hoofd weigerde dit verzoek en vond het een provocatie. In hoofdstuk 5 laat ik zien waarom het hoofd zo reageerde en hoe landoffers zich verhouden tot stereotypes van uitbuiting (economisch en ecologisch) maar niet tot het schenden van elkaars rechten. Landrituelen lijken daarom een onderwerp van tolerantie in plaats van een onderwerp van escalatie.

De controverse over het benoemen van een Konkomba leider voor het stadje Chamba (hoofdstuk 6), laat nog duidelijker zien dat niet Konkomba burgerschap versus Nanumba autochtonie als zondanig spanningen genereert maar veeleer een (veronderstelde) botsing tussen twee sets van rechten en vooral de beslissingsmacht – als autochtonen of als demografische meerderheid – om één set van rechten te onderschikken aan de andere. Terwijl ze Nanumba dorpschouwen erkennen en ook de noodzaak om hun eigen leiders door deze schouwen te laten erkennen, accepteerden veel Konkomba niet de beslissingsmacht van deze schouwen om een Konkomba kandidaat af te wijzen (zoals in Chamba het geval was). Voor veel Nanumba, aan de andere kant, was deze Konkomba weigering een ondermijning van de meest fundamentele regel van het Nanumba leiderschap, namelijk dat een benoeming te allen tijde een privilege is en nooit een recht. Deze patstelling werd niet opgelost door het Kumasi vredesakkoord maar er juist door versterkt, omdat de tweede clausule van dit akkoord een legalistische verwijzing bleek voor beide perspectieven.

Hoofdstuk 6 bestudeert het Chamba dispuut in detail, vanaf het begin, twee maanden na het ondertekenen van het vredesakkoord in 1996, tot de escalatie in 2002, de erop volgende de-escalatie en nieuwe escalatie in 2006. Met clausule twee als leidraad, stel ik de vraag waarom het kiezen van een Konkomba schouwen zo problematisch is en vooral waarom deze patstelling zo slecht op te lossen is. Wie heeft beslissingsmacht in deze zaak? Dit is de centrale vraag, niet alleen voor de Chamba zaak, maar voor de vrede in Nanun als zondanig. Zo kom ik tot een analyse die de meeste thema's uit eerdere hoofdstukken aan elkaar verbindt, namelijk hoe autochtonie discoursen zich verhouden tot soevereiniteit, ofwel beslissingsmacht.

In het Chamba dispuut, en dan vooral in 2002, verwezen Konkomba en Nanumba woordvoerders naar clause twee van het vredesakkoord maar ze gaven beide een andere interpretatie van deze overeenkomst. Terwijl de Konkomba Jeugdbeweging de nadruk legde op de vrije keuze van Konkomba om hun leiders te kiezen, benadrukte de Nanumba Jeugdbeweging juist het tweede deel van de clause, namelijk dat een dergelijke keuze overeen moet stemmen met de belangen van het Nanumba hoofd. In deze situatie zien we de grenzen van de consensus: terwijl Konkomba en Nanumba het eens zijn of Nanumba traditionele privileges en gelijke Konkomba rechten als burgers, overstijgt een innovatieve vorm van leiderschap zoals het Konkomba hoofdmanschap beide legalistische registers. De oplossing lijkt dus niet in de juridische sfeer te vinden te zijn en in plaats van consensus stel ik een vrede gebaseerd op compromis voor.

## About the author

Martijn Wienia was born on 30 November 1979 in Utrecht, the Netherlands, but bred in nearby Wijk bij Duurstede. After graduating from the Revis Lyceum in Doorn in 1998, he registered with Cultural Anthropology at Leiden University. In 2003, he obtained his Master's degree in Cultural Anthropology with additional qualifications in Development Sociology and African Studies. His MA thesis, based on an individual research project including five months of fieldwork in northern Ghana (August 2002-January 2003), won the Anthropology Department annual award for excellent research. With winning a prestigious scholarship from the Radboudstichting, he had the chance of studying Theology and Philosophy at the Catholic Theological University in Utrecht for one year.

Meanwhile, Martijn Wienia submitted a proposal for a PhD project to the Graduate School CNWS, Leiden University, which was awarded in 2004. From September 2004 until May 2009, he conducted the doctoral research, including two periods of fieldwork (March-September 2005 and August 2006-January 2007) in Ghana, of which this dissertation is the report. He also taught thrice in the elective course the Anthropology of Sub-Saharan Africa II and co-founded the PhD seminar Young Anthropologists in Leiden.

Since July 2009, Martijn Wienia has worked as policy officer with the WOTRO Science for Global Development division of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) in The Hague.

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