Tamale 1907-1957 : between colonial trade and colonial chieftainship

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'… a town of little importance…': Tamale towards independence

Introduction

This chapter is interested in developments in Tamale within the context of Ghana's path to independence. The period 1948-60 was one in which, as in the 1920s, Tamale's population grew significantly. Furthermore, by 1960 only 60 per cent of Tamale's population was Dagomba.[1] Not only did Tamale's population grow significantly, it also took on a far more ethnically heterogeneous character than hitherto. Like Tamale's demographic, Tamale's institutional anatomy also underwent significant transformation. The introduction of party politics and a number of 'secular' institutions transformed Tamale's socio-political landscape. These changes prompted a number of political realignments in Tamale. The horizontal and vertical dimensions between the legitimacy of the Gulkpe-Na and the Dakpema, the colonial administration, Muslim and Christian elites, ethnic headmen, southerners, and finally, new 'secular' political apparatuses such as the Tamale Urban Council (TUC) in 1952, dimensions in which alliances were based on a mixture of personal relationships, and local and traditional objectives, created a complex, contested, and often contradictory political landscape. The complexity of

[1] Eades, *Strangers*, 57.

Tamale's political landscape, especially in relation to that of Dagbon and the north more generally, resulted in the isolation of Tamale's local politics from the broader political structures of Dagbon and the Northern Territories. Tamale's inward-looking political dynamic, this chapter argues, was exacerbated by, in some instances, tensions between local political lines, as well as national, regional, and traditional cleavages. In short, this chapter argues that Tamale's isolation from northern politics more generally is in part the result of the complex and contested internal political stratifications and alignments as they developed in Tamale, and in part the result of how the local political alliances arising therefrom related to divisions within the political structures of Dagbon and the north.

A note on political configurations in the Northern Territories

It is tempting to analyse Ghana's independence in terms of dichotomies. The NTC was, for instance, a political organ with its roots firmly entrenched in traditional political systems and thus also worked to maintain those systems. The Northern People's Party (NPP), formed in the run-up to the 1954 election, shared an almost identical leadership to that of the NTC and thus also adopted chieftaincy as a core political priority. The CPP, on the other hand, has been remembered as a party opposed to chieftaincy.[2] These are neat distinctions that provide at least some indication of the broad political lines of Ghana's independence. But on the local level, such broad lines were frequently undermined. As a result, the broad lines of Ghana's independence politics threaten to obscure more than they expose in a study of local politics. A number of northern chiefs supported the CPP, despite the primarily anti-chieftaincy sentiment within the CPP. In Builsa, A. Afoko, the brother of the Sandemanab, the paramount chief in Builsa, won the constituency in 1954 as a CPP candidate, largely on account of his brother's support. In southern Navrongo another CPP candidate, L. R. Abavana won owing to his influence over the chief of Navrongo, while in Navrongo North, C. K. Tedam (NPP), the brother of a sub-divisional chief, the Pagapio, won the constituency. In such instances, perhaps it

[2] Rathbone, R., Nkrumah & the chiefs: The politics of chiefly politics, 1951-1960. London, 2000.

may be argued, patrimonial systems overrode rational, political decision-making procedures. These kinds of political ironies were to be seen in many places across the Gold Coast and its protectorates. Furthermore, after each election, many politicians 'crossed the floor', further blurring the local political lines of Ghana's independence. Politicians who championed NPP causes later became prominent members of the CPP. A large number of 'independents' during the 1954 elections further confuse potential dichotomies. The political patron phenomenon was clear everywhere in the Northern Territories, and certainly in many constituencies such systems had a profound impact on the election outcome. In Tamale also there is evidence of these kinds of political relations. Where possible, every attempt has been made to highlight personal linkages within the political arena. To overemphasise such relations may, however, work to discredit Tamale's electorate. Care is thus taken not to overstate the influence of such relationships.

Institutions, actors, and events: The emergence of traditional trajectories in northern politics

Ghana's independence from colonial rule involved a complex plethora of committees, commissions, councils, authorities, and assemblies. An overview of the birth, death, and operation of the various political apparatuses is (perhaps unfortunately) necessary in order to contextualise both northern and Tamale's local politics in relation to independence. On a national level, this bureaucratic maze has been studied perhaps most comprehensively by Dennis Austin, while P. A. Ladouceur has done so from a northern perspective. Martin Staniland dedicates several chapters of his book, *The Lions of Dagbon*, to understanding the place of Dagbon within the nationalist politics which took Ghana towards independence. The following overview rests primarily on their work.

The birth of the Northern Territories council

The conservative, pro-chieftaincy element of the north's political structure was born first out of the NTC, established in 1946. Following WWII, the colonial administration found calls for constitutional change increasingly difficult to ignore. Such calls found their expression specifically in demands for greater African

representation on the Legislative Assembly. In this vein, in January 1945, the Governor of the Gold Coast proposed the formation by the chiefs of a Northern Territories Joint Council, 'to settle among yourselves those problems which are common to you all and to select from amongst you representatives for the central legislature'.[3] On 16 and 17 December 1946, the NTC had its first meeting. For the colonial administration, chiefs represented the 'natural rulers', and it was thus hardly surprising that the creation of a regional council, initiated by the colonial administration itself, would have an overwhelmingly chiefly character. Members of the NTC were selected by the Native Authorities – remnants of indirect rule, which, as we have seen in previous chapters, had chieftaincy as its cornerstone. The NTC was the highest 'native' institution in the Northern Territories and, in the years which followed, largely dictated the trajectory of northern involvement in the nationalist politics of independence. Unsurprisingly, it positioned itself as staunchly pro-chieftaincy. Furthermore, the leadership of the NPP, formed seven years later in 1953, was almost identical to that of the NTC. The shift from regional council to political party ensured, as mentioned previously, that northern chiefs were represented within the development of Ghana's nationalist politics. In the 1954 election, the NPP won the second-highest number of votes, behind only the CPP, and thus, in line with the British parliamentary system, formed the official opposition. This laid the foundation for the broad lines of Ghana's independence – non-chieftaincy vs. chieftaincy, and, broadly, south vs. north.

The process of liberating Ghana from colonial rule started in proper in February and March, 1948, with the outbreak of the Accra riots. The immediate causes of the riots were two inter-related issues: The plight of cocoa farmers in the areas affected by swollen-shoot disease, and the increase in real prices of imported goods. What started out as a peaceful march turned violent when police opened fire on the crowd outside Christianborg Castle, killing several protestors. In response, the residents of Accra rioted. Before long, riots broke out in other urban centres, including Kumasi. After quelling the riots, the colonial administration launched the Watson

[3] Ladouceur, *Chiefs*, 73.

Commission to investigate the causes of the riots. The Watson Commission found that the constitution required reform. More specifically, the Legislative Assembly of the Gold Coast was to have greater African representation. The 'Accra riots' did not affect the Northern Territories, including Tamale. The CCNT noted: 'up here in the Northern Territories … public opinion is very sound and the people here … are sensible and law-abiding and do not easily get mislead'.[4] That the north, including Tamale, showed no interest in expressing severe dissatisfaction in the form of riots as the rest of the colony did, not only reveals something about the political relationship between north and south, it also had profound implications for the trajectory of northern involvement in the national political arena. Northern politics was not born out of mass civil dissatisfaction and unrest, expressed as a political statement, as was the case in the Asante and the Coast. The result was that the trajectory towards 'self-government' set out by the colonial administration was not significantly challenged within the existing colonial political apparatus. The vision of the colonial administration, as mentioned above, saw chiefs as the 'natural rulers', reflected also in the composition of the NTC.

Following the riots, the Watson Commission of Enquiry was established to look into the direct causes of the Accra riots. What was needed, it found, was a new constitution which provided for more African representation on the Legislative Council. Thereafter, the Coussey Committee was launched to set out more concrete steps in order to reformulate the constitution. The CCNT, W. H. Ingrams, asked the NTC to put forward four individuals to serve on the Coussey Committee, while the fifth would be selected by Ingrams himself, formally ending the policy of isolating the north from events in the south.[5] Including the five Northerners, all forty members of the Coussey Committee were African. Through the Coussey Committee, the north contributed directly to the formation and content of a new constitution. Importantly for this chapter, the manner in which the north entered the national political framework was within the parameters of strong, pro-chieftaincy

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4 Ladouceur, *Chiefs*, 80.

5 The CCNT became a member of the Legislative Assembly in 1936, but this did not significantly alter the policy of isolating the north from developments in the south.

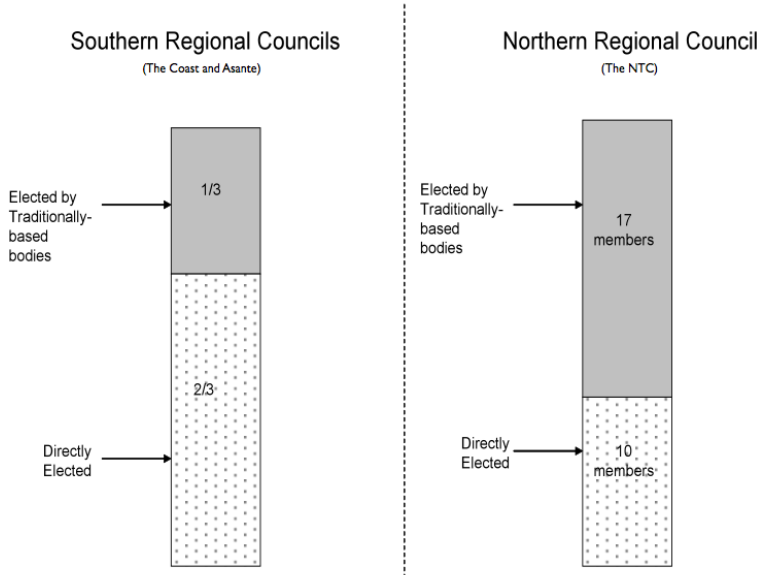
sentiments, guided initially by the NTC, an institution very much created in the vision of the colonial administration.

The Coussey committee

The fact that the northern representatives on the Coussey Committee were selected by the NTC meant, unsurprisingly, that all five had either an affiliation to chieftaincy or to the colonial administration, or to both. Two chiefs were nominated, Yakubu Tali (the Tali Na from Dagomba) and J.A. Karbo (the Lawra Na, from the North-West). The other two selected were J.A.A. Salaam, an Achimota-trained teacher, and N. Yenli, an Assistant Agricultural officer in charge of the Agricultural Training School at Tamale. Finally, Ingram selected J.A. Braimah, also a chief (the Kabachewura), from Gonja. Braimah had been clerk to the Gonja Native Authority since 1933. Three of the five northern members of the Coussey Committee were thus themselves chiefs, while the remaining two, although not chiefs, had built careers within the colonial administration, which itself had for many decades promoted chieftaincy as the natural authority of African societies.

The paradigm which came to define much of the north's involvement in national politics in the lead-up to Independence was dominated by a number of primary concerns. For the five Northern representatives on the Coussey Committee, all recommendations set forward by the members of the committee were studied within the gap between the level of development in the south compared with that of north. The northern members of the Coussey Committee were afraid to rush towards independence and argued that the gap between the north and the south needed to be closed before independence was granted. The inclusion of the north in the proceedings of the Coussey Committee thus posed a unique challenge for the committee: The committee had to find ways in which the new constitution could cater, on the one hand, to the progressive forces in the south, and on the other, the conservative sentiments which were pervasive in much of the north.

7.1. Constitution of regional councils: North vs. South



* The chart above reveals a majority for members of the NTC elected by traditionally based bodies (grey shaded area), in contrast to southern regional councils, where only one-third of the council was elected by traditionally based bodies.

In order to incorporate northern sentiments into a constitution designed largely by and for progressive southerners, a large amount of flexibility was required. Thus, for instance, the Coussey Committee recommended the creation of regional councils, which – *except in the case of the Northern Territories* – would not be based on the existing territorial councils.[6] The consequence was that whereas in the south the membership of the new regional councils would consist of two-thirds directly elected members and only one-third nominated by traditional elements, in the Northern Territories the regional council would consist of the seventeen members nominated by the NTC and only ten directly elected members. The members of the NTC were, as has been mentioned previously, aligned to chieftaincy. As a result,

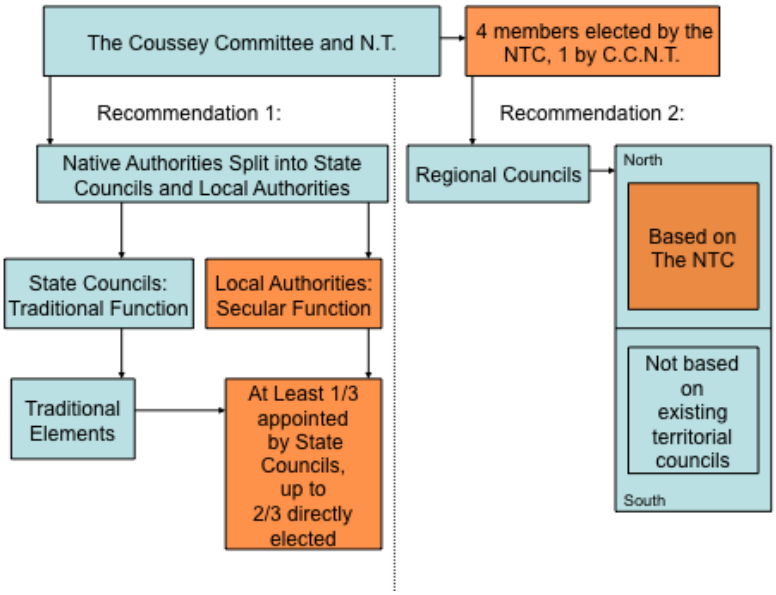
6 Ladouceur, *Chiefs*, 74.

while in southern regional councils traditional elites held only a minority, in the Northern Regional Council such traditional elites held a 17-to-10 majority (see Figure 7.1 below). In the north, therefore, the recommendations of the Coussey Committee reasserted chieftaincy at the apex of the north's regional hierarchical structure, in contrast to the developments in the structures of southern politics. This is more evidence of Grischow's argument that the emphasis on the maintenance of African social structure outlived the demise of indirect rule in the Northern Territories.

Furthermore, the Committee recommended that Native Authorities be abolished and replaced by a system of State Councils (SCs) and Local Authorities (LAs). SCs were mandated to preside over traditional issues, while LAs would assume responsibility for municipal initiatives. *At least* one-third of the members of the LAs would be appointees of the SCs, whilst *up to* two thirds would be elected.[7] The flexibility of the new structure in terms of the division between secular and traditional actors was part of a design which sought to allow the north to continue to sail its pro-chieftaincy course, while simultaneously allowing the south to fulfil its progressive agenda.

[7] Ladouceur, *Chiefs*, 74.

7.2. Coussey committee recommendations



- The two major recommendations of the Coussey Committee are set out in this chart. The constitution of the Northern Regional Council was a replica of the NTC, while in the south, regional councils had a directly elected majority. The split between State Councils and Local Authorities is also illustrated. Both recommendations were designed in order to cater for the conservative forces in the north and, simultaneously, the progressive forces in the south.

'The bad boys have come … the bad boys have come'

The pro-chieftaincy dominance of politics in the Northern Territories would have gone unchallenged had it not been for the simultaneous establishment of a CPP branch in Tamale in 1948. The CPP in Tamale challenged the dominant pro-chieftaincy elements in the Northern Territories. As Paul-Andre Ladouceur states of the late 1940s:

> … two very different types of politics were evolving in the Northern Territories, one based on the colonial administrative structure of indirect rule, the other derived from and allied with the nationalist politics of Southern Ghana. The former received strong encouragement and endorsement from the administration,

> while the latter, outside of the framework of the official politics was either ignored or subject to harassment and intimidation.[8]

If the traditionally focused NTC embodied the former of Ladouceur's 'types of politics' that emerged in the Northern Territories in the late 1940s, Ebenezer Adam perhaps embodied the latter. Ebenzer Adam was born in Tamale, the son of a carpenter working for the Public Works Department in Tamale. In 1939 Ebenezer Adam completed his penultimate year at Achimota College. On his journey back to Tamale for the school holidays, he stopped at Kumasi for two days to visit family. When he returned to Tamale, Ebenezer Adam reflects, "people were saying, 'the bad boys have come … the bad boys have come'".[9] For reasons he did not yet know, he was ordered to appear in front of the Education Officer. He was told that his grant was to be rescinded on the grounds that he was "visiting Kumasi without a permit".[10] Adam was able to complete his schooling at Achimota as a result of private funding he had secured with the assistance of the headmaster of Achimota.

How much this confrontation between Adam and the colonial administration had to do with the anti-colonial politicisation of Adam is not clear, but in the years which followed, a discernable resentment towards colonial domination manifested itself in a political career largely dedicated to decolonising the Gold Coast. In 1940, after completing his training at Achimota, Adam was sent to Kumasi to teach. He joined the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) in 1947 and in 1948, on the outbreak of the Accra riots, he was sent to Tamale to open a branch of the UGCC. Adam remembers of his arrival at Tamale that "although individuals knew of the UGCC, there was no party presence when I arrived in 1948".[11] He went in search of a support-base. Clerks who worked for the colonial administration, generally the most educated social strata in Tamale, almost all southerners, were not permitted to join political parties and were thus of little use to Ebenezer Adam. Adam thus assembled a series of "Fante, Ga, and other southern businessmen".[12] in Tamale and proposed

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8 Ladouceur, *Chiefs*, 83.
9 Interview with Ebenezer Adam, Tamale, March, 2010.
10 Ibid.
11 Interview with Ebenezer Adam.
12 Ibid.

the opening of a branch of the UGCC in Tamale, with their support. Adam became the secretary of the new branch, while his uncle, R.S. Iddrissu, a transport owner also based in Kumasi, was elected chairman. An interesting feature of the UGCC branch in Tamale, and later the CPP branch, is that early on, although its leadership (Ebenezer Adam and R.S. Iddrissu) were very much local in terms of Tamale, the majority of its support came from foreigners. Both Adam and Iddrissu supported the new party founded by Kwame Nkrumah, the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), in 1949, and both transferred to and became prominent members of the CPP branch in Tamale.

7.3. 'Types' of politics in the Northern Territories and Tamale

Type 1	Type 2
Based on the Structures of Indirect Rule, supported by the colonial administration, pro-chieftaincy	An outcome of nationalist political thinking in the south, outside 'officialdom', as defined largely by the colonial administration, anti-chieftaincy
Northern Territories Council	United Gold Coast Convention
Mamuni Bawumia, Yakubu Tali (later the Tolon Na), J.A. Nagba, J.A. Braimah	J.H. Allassani (after 1951), R.S. Iddrissu, Ebenezer Adam, Ayarna Imoru
Northern Peoples Party	Convention Peoples Party
Dakpema	Gulkpe Na

* The two types of politics set out by Ladouceur. The table shows the contrasting dominance of each 'type of politics' in the Northern Territories generally (left-hand side), and in Tamale (right-hand side).

The Ewart committee

Following the conclusion of the Coussey Committee in November 1949 and the acceptance of the recommendation to increase the African representation on the Legislative Council, an election for the Legislative Assembly needed to be held at the earliest possible date. The Ewart Committee was set up with the mandate of

working out the technicalities of the 'delimitation of constituencies and the establishment of voting procedures, qualifications and disqualifications of voters and candidates etc'.[13] The Ewart Committee was a working committee of the Legislative Council, and as no northerners were, at that stage, members of the Legislative Assembly, the north was not represented on the Ewart Committee. The Ewart Committee recommended that whereas in the south, direct elections were to be held, in the north, MPs would be elected by an electoral college. As a result, previous authors associate the Ewart Committee with a disenfranchising of the north.[14] That the Ewart Committee disenfranchised the north is technically true – northerners were not given the opportunity to elect their national representatives directly – but the recommendations set out by the Ewart Committee for the north were directly in line with what the five northern members of the Coussey Committee had argued: owing to a general lack of education, northerners were not in state to elect MPs directly, and for the foreseeable future, chiefs would thus act as custodians of the people. In this vein, the Ewart Committee noted that in the north 'there appeared to be universal support for nomination'[15] by an electoral college. The electoral college would consist of the 17 members of the NTC and another 104 members, who were chosen on a population basis by the Native Authorities. The Chief Regional Officer (who replaced the CCNT) recommended that the new district council areas be made so as to correspond with the areas of the traditional units of Native Authorities. Furthermore, each of the new Local Authorities corresponded directly with that of Subordinate Native Authorities, just as under indirect rule. Finally, in Dagbon, the Ya Na was the president of the Yendi division's Local Authority, which according to Staniland, 'symbolised the continuing authority of chieftaincy'.[16] The only challenge to the electoral college came from the Tamale branch of the CPP. They submitted a memorandum which indicated that they were vehemently against nomination by an electoral college and in favour of direct elections because, they felt, the process by which the electoral college was

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13 Ladouceur, *Chiefs*, 75.
14 See, for instance, Ladouceur, *Chiefs*, 75.
15 Austin, D., *Politics in Ghana, 1948-1960*. Oxford. 1964, 232.
16 Staniland, *Lions*, 128.

constituted was strongly biased in favour of chieftaincy.[17] But outside of Tamale the CPP had little traction. As a result, the CPP memorandum could be, and was, simply ignored. Both Ebenzer Adam and R.S. Iddrissu boycotted the nomination process. Ebenezer Adam complained: That, "They did not want any CPP people involved in the electoral college".[18]

The electoral college was mandated to nominate the 19 northern seats on the Legislative Council. Thirty-four candidates challenged for the 19 available seats. The nominations of the electoral college took place largely along ethnic lines, and selections were made with more due regard for personalities than political convictions. Although the CPP did not officially put any candidates forward, two CPP members ran of their own accord (see list below). One of the two CPP candidates, E. A. Mahama, tied for nineteenth place with Seidu Wala, who was the Katua-Na of Katua, but the CCNT cast the deciding vote in favour of the Katua-Na. The Muslim Association Party (MAP) representative for Tamale, Alhadji Osumanu, tied for tenth place, with 36 votes.

[17] Austin, *Politics*, 232.
[18] Interview with Ebenezer Adam.

7.4. Northern candidates for legislative assembly

Candidates	No.of votes
Yakubu Tali	73
J. H. Allassani	67
J. A. Braimah	55
Mumumi Koray	54
J. B. Harruna	48
L. R. Abavana	46
A. Afoko	42
S. D. Dombo	39
Sumani Bukari	36
Alhadji Osumanu	36
Abudu Mumuni	35
Ayeebo Asumda	34
Jambaidu Awuni	33
Bukari Yakubu	32
Ayarna Imoru	31
J. A. Ayinibisa	29
Bagamsa Dimongso	29
Alidu Kanton	29
Seidu Wala	28

* A list of the 34 men elected by the electoral college to represent the Northern Territories in the Legislative Assembly.

Eight of the 19 elected members were chiefs in their own right. Five were prominent members of the NTC. The remaining members were teachers in native authority schools. They were elected largely because they were literate, but they did not necessarily posses any interest in national politics. The result of the political trajectory of the north was that after 1951 (as before), official northern politics was dominated by pro-chieftaincy elements. This outcome was the result of a chain of events starting with the formation of the NTC in 1946, but was greatly aided by the fact that in 1951 the north did not hold direct elections like Asante and the Coast, but relied on an electoral college whose constitution was based on Native Authorities (each one presided over by a chief, since the introduction of indirect rule in 1930) and the NTC (a council created on the initiative of the colonial administration and based on chiefly systems).

The 19 nominated northern members of the Legislative Assembly were seen initially to represent a united block, who broadly took up the same positions as the northern members of the Coussey Committee had done. The priority issues of the northern members of the Coussey Committee continued as the priority issues of the northern block in the Legislative Assembly. The northern block saw itself as essentially neutral, not aligned to any party; they considered their role as being the custodians of northern interests and thus to support an organisation which furthered those interests. Nkrumah was encouraged by the British Government to include the north in his cabinet because it was felt that to select only CPP members threatened to create northern hostilities and perhaps, in the extreme, secessionist tendencies. As a result, J. A. Braimah was appointed to the cabinet as Minister without portfolio, whilst J. H. Allasani became his Ministerial Secretary. Despite his nomination to a CPP-dominated cabinet, J. A. Braimah continued to assert in the assembly that he and other northern members of the Legislative Assembly would continue to adopt a neutral position regarding party politics.

Thus, while Nkrumah and other CPP politicians based their program around independence at the soonest instance ('Independence Now'), the northern block under Braimah continued to assert concerns about the widening economic and social development gap between north and south as a result of rushing towards independence. J. A. Braimah, who had subsequently been made Minister of Communications and Works, addressed the Legislative Assembly, warning that

> Those who would like to insert such a date … they will be paving the gloomy path of national suicide; they will be driving a wedge between north and south; they will be sounding the death-knell of national unity and destroying the hard won confidence of the north … [19]

The issue of chieftaincy continued to be of fundamental interest to the northern block, although at times it was simply taken for granted because each of the 19 northern members of the Legislative Assembly had found his prominence, directly or indirectly, in the traditional system developed during the colonial period. Despite

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[19] Braimah, J.A., Address to the Legislative Assembly, July, 1953. In: Metcalfe, G.E., *Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957.* UK, 1964, 717.

the contrast of the political sentiments of the northern Members of the Legislative Assembly MLAs on their priority issues with CPP-based nationalist politics, CPP members continued to exert pressure on the northern MLAs to join the CPP party and found that some younger members of the northern block, especially amongst peoples where colonially endorsed chieftaincy had not worked in their favour, such as the Kusasi, were receptive to such invitations. Six of the 19 northern MLAs were soon CPP members, dividing the unity of the northern block within the Legislative Assembly. But this was not considered to be necessarily problematic by the northern block in the Legislative Assembly. What in the end broke the back of the idea of northern unity was ironically an integral part of its original existence: The Northern Territories railway.

The question of the Northern Territories railway, laid to rest by the colonial administration in the early 1930s, had been resurrected through the NTC. J. A. Braimah had put the suggestion of the Northern Territories railway to the cabinet, who accepted it without much fuss and voted ten million pounds to the project. The immediate response of the northern MLAs was to support such a railway. However, when the route of the proposed railway came to be discussed, opinions amongst northern MLAs differed. Three routes were proposed: one from Kumasi through Tamale to Navrongo: Another further west through Kintampo and Damongo; and another through Bimbilla and Yendi to Bawku. Each of the Northern MLPs supported the railway which passed closest to the area from which he came. The lack of consensus over the route the railway was to take caused the project to be shelved for 15 years. In the meantime, the Volta Dam became an increasingly interesting proposition for Nkrumah, and resources voted for the railway were redirected. Instead, the existing Kumasi-Tamale road was tarred, and work was begun on a new road from Kumasi through Kintampo to Tamale. But this was considered sparse compensation for the abandonment of the railway project. The question of the railway route exposed the illusion of the northern unity that the northern block had hitherto propagated. The implications of the railway split created new hostilities within the northern block, which led to other political frictions. When the question of the timing of independence arose again, the northern MLAs who

were also now CPP members pushed explicitly for independence sooner rather than later, while others such as J. A. Braimah, continued to caution against a hasty move towards independence. If the northern block had previously considered the CPP with suspicion, it increasingly saw the CPP as an outright threat and treated it with hostility. The increasing strain between the hard core of the northern block and the CPP caused Nkrumah and the Governor to schedule a meeting with the NTC and a number of northern traditional leaders in Tamale in May 1953. The purpose was to discuss how the path to independence was to proceed. Prior to the meeting, two memoranda were issued by prominent northern MLAs, one by J. H. Allasani with a conservative tone and another my Ayarna Imoru, by now a staunch CPP member, calling for immediate independence. The NTC placed its hope in the British to fulfil their obligations of 'protection', as set out by earlier treaties. But the Governor was quick to dismiss such expectations. Essentially, the game was up, and the northern block and the NTC had to concede that independence would come sooner, rather than later.

The formation of the NPP

The formation of the NPP out of existing NTC structures meant a departure from a number of fundamental illusions. As Ladouceur notes: 'Gone were the days of aspiring for neutrality in the Assembly, striving only to promote Northern interests, with no alignments with parties in the south'.[20] As the relationship between the northern block and the northern CPP-members became increasingly unworkable, the idea of a northern political party was mooted by MLAs aligned to the NTC. The NTC was not a political party, and it was felt that northern interests needed to be represented in the upcoming elections in 1954. As a result, in April 1954, the Northern People's Party (NPP) was established in Tamale with a leadership which came very close to matching that of the NTC. It set out, originally, to act as a pressure group, to defend northern interests. It aimed primarily to have the economic gap with the south closed before any form of self-government took place. It consciously attempted to aggregate all northern interests, electing a Dagau as

[20] Ladouceur, *Chief*s, 143.

National Chairman, a Mamprusi as Vice-Chairman and a Dagomba as General Secretary.[21] Despite the short period between the formation of the NPP and the 1954 elections, the NPP-controlled seats (independent NPP sympathisers and the MAP, a staunch pro-NPP organisation) won more than 60 per cent of the northern vote, while the CPP won 35.1 per cent. The CPP thus controlled 9 of the north's 26 seats, against the NPP's 17. Although the 35 per cent won by the CPP represented a fairly good showing, the NPP was in firm control of most of the Northern Territories. Ironically, the 1954 election result threatened to be too good for the NPP. The Asante-based Ghana Liberation Party, which the NPP leadership held in high regard, had won only one seat. After the CPP, the NPP had the most votes and was suddenly confronted with being the official opposition party. As the NPP was born out of those who wanted to represent northern interest in parliament from a neutral political position, the step to official opposition party was indeed large. The NPP, angered by the Governor's recommendation to reject the position of official opposition, accepted.[22]

During the period 1954-6, in which the NPP sat uncomfortably in the role of official opposition, the political landscape changed significantly, especially with the formation of the National Liberation Movement (NLM). The NLM was born out of disgruntled Asante cocoa farmers who blamed the CPP for the fixing of cocoa prices, despite the sharp increases in global cocoa prices over the period. The NLM soon received the political and financial backing of the Asantehene. Politically, the NLM sought to create a federal system for the new independence structures. The federal emphases of the NLM appeared to be fundamentally contradictory to the demands of the NPP, making an alliance between the two parties unhandy. Furthermore, unlike the NPP, the NLM were not at all opposed to a swift move towards independence. The Togoland Congress, a party who lobbied for Togoland to be re-united with French Togo, also joined the opposition alliance, further

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[21] Kelly, B. & R.B. Benning, 'Ideology, regionalism, self-interest and tradition: An investigation into contemporary politics in Northern Ghana', *Africa,* 77: 2(2007), 7.

[22] Nkrumah's refusal to recognise the NPP as the official opposition when the Assembly reconvened in July 1954 so angered the NPP leadership that they decided to take up the position of official opposition.

reducing the points of contact between parties within the alliance. For the NPP, within the alliance, federalism meant that money earned in the cocoa and gold sectors in Asante would remain in Asante, while the presence of the Togoland Congress in the alliance threatened to divide Dagbon and Mamprussi, two very powerful northern kingdoms. It appeared as if what bound the alliance was the pervasive anti-CPP, anti-Coast sentiment, which is not a good basis for a constructive partnership.[23] However, the NPP regarded the federal system as an extreme version of a political structure that safeguarded local interests by inhibiting the regional power of central government, which spoke directly to the leadership of the NPP. An alliance with the NLM would also rebut CPP allegations that the NPP could not be considered a true political party because it had only a regional following. To the NLM, the NPP was an interesting partner because they held significant representation in the Legislative Assembly. On the grounds that the NLM promised a development fund for the north, outside the federal system, the NPP agreed to an alliance with the NLM and the Togoland Congress.

The alliance between the NLM, the NPP, and the Togoland Congress significantly changed the national and regional political debate. The change in the political landscape prompted a call for new elections, one condoned by the British authorities. New elections were to be held in December 1956. The NPP set itself a target of controlling 20 of the 26 northern seats, an improvement of 5 over the 1954 result (in 1954 the NPP controlled 15 seats by winning 12 seats and controlling 5 more through 4 NPP-independents and the MAP, and losing 2 seats where politicians crossed the floor to the CPP). To the CPP, the north was no longer an unknown entity as it had been in 1954 when it held its first direct election. Far more attention was thus given to the local level than had been the case in 1954. In the event, the CPP won 3 formerly NPP-controlled seats during the 1956 election (Bawku, Tallensi, and the seat of the Tamale-Nanton constituency). But the CPP also lost 3 CPP-controlled seats (Tumu, Bolgatanga, and Savelugu). The result of the 1956 election was thus the same as that of 1954: CPP controlled 11 seats, while

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[23] Ladouceur, *Chief*s, 133.

the NPP controlled 15. In total, the NLM won 12 seats, and the Togolese Congress won 2. In total, the NLM/NPP/Togoland Congress alliance won 29 seats, against the CPP's 71.

7.5. Gold Coast: Election outcome, 1956

Party	*No. of votes*	*% of votes*	*No. of seats (104)*
Convention People's Party (CPP)	398,141	57.10%	71
Northern People's Party (NPP)	72,440	10.39%	15
National Liberation Movement (NLM)	145,657	20.89%	12
Togoland Congress (TC)	20,352	2.92%	2
Muslim Association Party (MAP)	11,111	1.59%	1
Federation of Youth (FY)	10,745	1.54%	1
Independents	38,811	5.57%	2

Source: African Elections Database

To Nkrumah and the CPP, having attained a reasonable majority, there were no more obstacles to freeing Ghana from colonial rule. A motion to call on the British Government to grant independence was put before the Legislative Assembly. Both the NLM and the NPP protested, boycotting the motion, which was subsequently passed with a majority of 72 to none. To no avail, the alliance sent a delegation to London to protest against the manner in which CPP was taking the Gold Coast to independence. But the game was up. Independence would be granted to Ghana, under the leadership of the CPP, with the NLM, NPP, and Togoland Congress alliance as the opposition. On 6 March 1957, outside the Chief Commissioner's residence on Watherston Road in Tamale, the Union Jack was lowered for the last time, and replaced by the flag of independent Ghana.

Establishing politics in Tamale and Dagbon

The subsection above has delineated the broad lines of northern involvement in Ghana's independence for the period 1946-57. We noted earlier Martin Staniland's observation: 'the degree to which Tamale kept to itself politically is an interesting feature of northern politics'.[24] There were two reasons for Tamale's political isolation: The first was that the complexity of Tamale's institutional anatomy created a political matrix which was introspective; the second was that Tamale's political elite were to some extent forced to look inwards because of the tension between internal and external alliances.

Delineating Tamale's political landscape

Why did the CPP lose the Tamale-Nanton in the 1954 election by a landslide, and how were they able to manifest themselves in Tamale so as to win, also by a landslide, the 1956 election? The reasons for Tamale's political swing are fourfold: Firstly, cleavages within the CPP leadership of the Tamale branch, which split the CPP in the 1954 elections, were resolved for a brief period during the 1956 elections; secondly, the death of the Nanton Na, a staunch supporter of the conservative Muslim Association Party (MAP), and the succession of his son, a supporter of the CPP; thirdly, the CPP managed to gain control of the TUC and exploited its municipal power for political gains; and fourthly, Tamale's electorate was undergoing changes which inclined it more towards the anti-chieftaincy rhetoric of the CPP, especially amongst its growing numbers of non-Dagomba residents. The following subsection is concerned with each of these political determinants.

Before attempting to deconstruct Tamale's local political landscape, it should be noted that the fact that Tamale kept to itself politically did not mean that Tamale was itself not politicised. On the contrary, Tamale was the stomping ground of the north's political elite. The Tamale branch of the CPP was by some distance the largest in the Northern Territories, with a membership estimated to be somewhere between two and three thousand in the early 1950s. The Northern People's Party (NPP), the largest opposition party in the Gold Coast after the 1954 election, was

[24] Staniland, *Lions*, 217, footnote 26.

formed in Tamale. The NPP had its first delegates' conference in Sabongida in Tamale in April 1954, where Mumuni Bawumia, a founding member of the NPP, complained of being slapped by Ayarna Imoru, a prominent northern member of the CPP. Imoru was restrained by police. Furthermore, at a rally for the inauguration of the NPP held near the Dakpema's palace in Tamale, CPP leaders such as Ayarna Imoru, Ebenezer Adam, and R.S. Iddrissu threw stones at the delegates in order to prevent the inauguration taking place. Once again, police were required to intervene. But such political confrontations in Tamale had at their centre questions about the Northern Territories generally. The politics of Tamale existed separately from the larger discussion about the Northern Territories. This might not have been peculiar had Tamale not been the economic centre of the Northern Territories and by some distance the largest city. But to construe Tamale as being somehow a-political is a profound misrepresentation.

In 1954, the Tamale-Nanton constituency was won by the MAP with Alhadji Osumanu, the elder statesmen of the party, winning the seat. He defeated R.S. Iddrissu of the CPP by a landslide. The MAP manifesto reaffirmed the traditional alliance between Muslims and chiefs and declared: 'Chieftaincy shall be restored to its ancient dignity'.[25] As staunch supporters of chiefly institutions, the MAP was anti-CPP. Alfai Larden, chairman of the Kumasi branch of the MAP, wrote to the *Ashanti Pioneer* newspaper: 'True Moslems can never be friends with the CPP'.[26] The newly formed NPP did not run in Tamale owing to an agreement with the MAP. The MAP and the NPP occupied the same political ground, and the NPP felt that if they were to enter the race in Tamale, they would divide the conservative vote, opening the way for a CPP victory. Mumuni Bawunia writes of the 1954 election results:

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25 Austin, *Politics*, 232.
26 Ibid.

> The 1954 general elections gave the Northern People's Party 17 out of the 26 seats including the independent candidates of Yakubu Tali, J.A. Bramaih, C.K. Tedam, Alhaji Osumanu & W.A. Amoro who were sponsored by the party.[27]

The (erroneous) idea in the mind of this high-ranking NPP member that Alhaji Osumanu was an NPP sponsored independent candidate is indicative of the relationship between the MAP and the NPP.

Whereas in the 1954 elections the conservative MAP defeated the CPP by a landslide in the Tamale-Nanton constituency, in the 1956 elections the CPP won, also by a significant margin. The outcome of the 1956 election was thus almost the reverse of the 1954 election: in 1954 the MAP won over 60 per cent of Tamale's vote, and R.S. Iddrissu only 39.6 per cent, while in the 1956 election Iddrissu won 59 per cent of the vote, and the MAP only 36 per cent.

Given the relatively large CPP presence in Tamale, it is noteworthy that the CPP lost so dramatically in 1954 to a party even more opposed to the CPP than the NPP. Tamale's swing has been mentioned, albeit in passing, by previous authors.[28] Martin Staniland argues that Osumanu Alhadji was able to win the 1954 Tamale-Nanton constituency on account of being supported by the chief of Nanton, the Nanton-Na Sulemana, a staunch supporter of the MAP. Staniland writes: 'Nanton-Na (who died in 1954) was a firm supporter of the MAP and it was largely through the accession of Nanton votes that Osumanu defeated Iddrissu'.[29] Staniland notes in a footnote that the Nanton-Na's son, Tia Sulemana, who succeeded his father as chief, was, in contrast to his father, a staunch CPP supporter. The lack of endorsement in the 1956 election was responsible for the MAP's defeat by the CPP. Staniland points also to 'factionalism' within the Tamale branch of the CPP. According to Staniland, Ebenezer Adam was head of a 'youth faction' within the Tamale branch, which included Yahaya Iddi, the brother of the Gulkpe-Na. R.S. Iddrissu, however, was wealthier and better connected at the party headquarters in Accra. R.S. Iddrissu managed to get Ebenezer Adam excluded from the party slate in the 1954 elections

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27 Bawunia, M., A life in the political history of Ghana; Memoirs of Alhji Mumuni Bawumia. Ghana, 2004, 50.

28 See Staniland, *Lions*, and Austin, *Politics.*

29 Staniland, *Lions*, 141.

and Ebenzer Adam and his friends refused to campaign for R.S. Iddrissu, who subsequently lost the Tamale-Nanton constituency. A *modus vivendi* was established whereby Ebenzer Adam ran the TUC whilst R.S. Iddrissu ran the party.[30] The fact that almost the total number of votes counted for the 1956 election was almost 30 per cent more than the total counted during the 1954 election (3,706 in 1954 and 4,810 in 1956) may suggest that some CPP members boycotted the earlier election, although the MAP also lost a significant number of votes, and it may also have been the case that since the 1954 elections were the first, the number of unregistered residents of Tamale was significantly higher than in 1956. Nonetheless, in a similar vein to Staniland, Dennis Austin argues that the swing was the result of a by now well-documented feud between Ebenzer Adam and R.S. Iddrissu. According to Austin, this feud split the party and, consequently, the CPP electorate, opening the way for Alhadji Osumanu's victory. Austin writes:

> It is doubtful whether either Ebenezer Adam or R.S. Iddrissu could have won in Tamale in 1954 without the support for each other which each refused to give. So Alhadji Osumanu got in on a MAP/NPP ticket. In 1956 however, when the CPP was more united and the local quarrel between Iddrissu and Ebenezer Adam had been patched up, Iddrissu defeated Alhaji.[31]

There were more reasons still for Tamale's swing between 1954 and 1956. Significantly, the emergence of the TUC as a CPP-dominated institution meant that the CPP was able to exert significant influence over the everyday authority in Tamale. This drastically and increasingly changed Tamale's political landscape. Finally, chieftaincy increasingly struggled to cope with the complexities of urban life in Tamale. The first of the reasons why chieftaincy in Tamale struggled to assert itself over the new apparatus is the subject of Chapter 4, and it is superfluous to re-develop the arguments here. However, the second two reasons – the TUC and urban life – require specific attention.

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30 Staniland, *Lions*, 141. See footnote 26.
31 Austin, *Politics*, 222, footnote 26.

Chieftaincy and politics in Tamale; 'nobody will break down his own house to make it possible for somebody to build his'[32]

Bayart's 'reciprocal assimilation of elites'[33] has been employed by previous authors to describe the 'fusion of elites'[34] in the Northern Territories.[35] This fusion occurred not only within the burgeoning northern intelligentsia but also across different strata, between members of the intelligentsia and traditional elites and, of course, the colonial administration itself. But such fusions also had limits at the local level, between the Gulkpe-Na and the Dakpema. Such a fundamental polarisation could not be overcome through Bayart's process. The process of fusion was not fluid at all levels, and this meant inconsistencies were created in some instances between alliances on the local, regional, and national levels. The following subsection is concerned with alignments (fusions) both between and across the tradition/non-traditional political divide in Tamale, at the local, regional, and national level.

Since the formation of the NTC in 1946, it became clear that not chiefs, but the sons of chiefs and those strongly aligned and associated with chiefly institutions would represent the north in the national political apparatus. Such 'representatives' were pushed forward and 'sponsored' by chiefs and acted on behalf of the chiefly classes. There were exceptions – most notably the Tolon-Na, who served as a prominent figure within regional, national, and traditional politics – but generally speaking, chiefs were not directly involved in national politics. After 1951, with the march towards independence in full swing, this tendency expressed itself as a pretence of political neutrality on behalf of chiefs. Despite the thin veil of political neutrality, chiefs were both subjected to political outcomes as well as being crucial determinants of those outcomes. There was perhaps only one issue on which the Ya Na could be outspoken, and that was the issue of Togoland. A position on Togoland could be taken because its inclusion in an independent Ghana was supported by all

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32 Braimah, J.A., Address to the Legislative Assembly, July, 1953. In: Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957*. UK, 1964, 718.

33 Bayart, J-F., *The sate in Africa: The politics of the belly*, 2nd Edition. Polity Press, UK, 2009, 150.

34 Bayart, *State*, 155.

35 Lentz, *Ethnicity*, 180.

Dagombas, no matter which intra-ethnic division they belonged to. Braimah noted that the Ya Na had stated that:

> if the new constitution will make it possible for that part of Dagbon State under the United Kingdom Administration to remain and become part of the free Gold Coast, then it may be possible for me and my people to give it our support. On the other hand, if the new constitution makes for the entire breaking away of that part of Dagbon State in Togoland from the main part of the state which is in the Gold Coast, then of course it will only be natural for me and my people to resist any movement towards independence for the Gold Coast … Nobody will break down his own house to make it possible for somebody to build his.[36]

But the Ya Na's role was to unite Dagbon, and taking a side politically threatened to deepen existing divisions. Those divisions are broadly speaking the subject of this subsection, and especially, how they relate to Tamale's traditional elite. For the historian, the contradiction between the prominent political role played by chiefs and their absence from primary sources is of course problematic, because it means that at an important political vector, namely chiefs, is largely silent in the available primary sources relating to the emergence of nationalist politics in the Northern Territories. There are, however, thankfully, enough sources to carry out a discussion about chieftaincy in Tamale in the context of the development of nationalist politics. Of particular interest here are the political alignments of Tamale's traditional political elite and how those alignments came to be. Given the political determinacy of chiefs, the discussion speaks also to questions about how the CPP came to manifest its presence in Tamale.

The interaction between national, regional, local, and traditional political structures in the Northern Territories is extremely complex. 'Local politics involved a complicated set of relations between chiefs, civil servants, MPs, ministers, local councillors, party officials'.[37] Such 'sets of relations' were determined by a combination of personal ties, inter- and intra-ethnic considerations, historical developments, and chieftaincy disputes. In order to understand the contours of Tamale's local politics, a number of such political variables need to be brought into

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[36] Braimah, J.A., Address to the Legislative Assembly, July, 1953. In: Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957*. UK, 1964, 718.

[37] Staniland, *Lions*, 138.

focus. This requires an understanding of developments surrounding chieftaincy in Dagbon and how emerging political parties aligned themselves within the divisions created through succession disputes of the Ya Na at Yendi. There were a number of issues in which (Dagomba) chiefs were either for or against, either directly or by association. The following subsection is concerned with the political divisions on the national and regional and traditional level, and how and why both the Gulkpe-Na and the Dakpema slotted into such divisions.

On the 6 February 1948, upon his death, the ten-year reign of Ya Na Mahama II of the Andani Gate came to an end. Two candidates emerged as the most likely to succeed Ya Na Mahama II: His eldest son (thus also an Andani), the serving regent, who was hovering between the chieftaincy of Sanerigu and Karaga (both important skins in the Dagomba traditional hierarchy) without holding either, and the chief of Mion, the Mion-Lana, an Abudu. Attempts to 'democratise' the succession process by, most notably, the colonial administration, were largely abandoned in the 1948 succession, and in the presence of considerable tension between supporters of the two candidates, the Mion-Lana (from the Abudu Gate) was selected as the new Ya Na, Mahama III. As Mahama III made his way to Yendi, the aforementioned regent (from the Andani Gate) moved to assume the skin vacated at Mion.

In 1954, the same year in which the north held its first direct elections, Ya Na Mahama III died, reopening new complex succession disputes. The most contested components of the discussion had to do with what the succession procedure was, and in the absence of clarity on the procedure, almost anything was defendable. The son of Mahama II, now Mion-Lana, again put himself forward as a candidate, and for the first time introduced the idea of a rotational basis between the two gates. The other candidates were the following: The Yo Na (chief of Savelugu), who was at this stage well over eighty years of age (an Andani); the eldest son of Mahama III, who had assumed the regency (an Abudu); and Karaga-na Adam (the great-grandson of Mahama III, and so also an Abudu). This time the expanded, 'democratised' selection committee – introduced largely by the colonial administration – including the Gulkpe-Na, was employed to determine the successor through a 'majority-vote'

mechanism. In March 1954, the selection committee voted in the incumbent regent, the son of Mahama III, Abdulai III. The Mion-Lana, six years previously in 1948, in more or less the same situation, had not been selected to succeed the Ya Na because he was only the regent and did not possess a chieftaincy (at the time he was hovering between Saniergu and Karaga). The outcome sparked protests amongst the Andani Gate and its followers. Nonetheless, the outcome of the 1954 succession was that the Abudu Gate, who had dominated the paramountcy for many years (except the ten years between 1938 and 1948, when Mahama II had ruled) once again managed to retain the paramountcy.

The emergence of party politics in the north aligned itself almost immediately with this increasingly deep division. J.H. Allassani and Yakubu Tali, who in 1953 became Tolon Na, were the most actively involved in the interface between politics and Dagon's political structures. Both men had been members of the NTC. Allassani came from a village near Tamale and entered Tamale primary school in 1914. In 1949, after serving as a headmaster in Kumasi, he became Secretary to the Dagomba Native Authority. Like the Tolon Na, Allassani was appointed to Nkrumah's first cabinet in 1951. Interestingly, like many, Allassani moved from the NPP to the CPP during his time in Nkrumah's cabinet, while Tolon Na switched to the CPP only much later, after Ghana's independence. During the period 1951 to Ghana's independence (and also thereafter), Allassani and the Tolon Na emerged as representatives, in terms of the Northern Territories, of opposite ends of the political spectrum: Allassani, a CPP member, was a staunch supporter of the Mion-Lana (Andani chieftaincy), while the Tolon Na, a founding member of the NPP, was related through marriage to, and strong advocate of, incumbent Ya Na Abdulai III, an Abudu.

The Ya Na, Abdulai III, made every attempt to present himself as politically neutral, but this position, given what was at stake, was never likely to be tenable. When Nkrumah visited the Ya Na in 1954, the most he could get from the Ya Na was a declaration of neutrality, which was announced on the radio, and angered the NPP leadership. It angered the NPP leadership because, no matter how nuanced attempts

were to establish neutrality, the Ya Na was effectively an NPP supporter. He would become increasingly NPP as prominent northern politicians, lead by Allassani, advocated increasingly for his abdication and the installation of the Mion-Lana as Ya Na.

What were the implications for political alliances amongst Tamale's political elite of the interaction between national politics and Dagbon political structures? The Gulkpe-Na supported the CPP candidate, R.S. Iddrissu, because of 'his connections and deference towards chiefs'.[38] But one could not be aligned to R.S. Iddrissu without being aligned also to the CPP, and to Allassani – and if one were aligned to Allassani, one was necessarily anti-Abudu rule. Developments on the local level further manoeuvred the Gulkpe-Na into the CPP corner. The NPP, under the leadership of amongst others, the Tolon-Na, aligned themselves with the Dakpema. Indeed, the inaugural rally of the NPP in 1954 was held at the Dakpema's palace. It is of course ironic that the NPP – *'the chiefs' party'* – so fundamentally concerned with the legitimacy of 'tradition', sought not only to exploit the Dakpema's ongoing legitimacy, but also sought clearly to promote his legitimacy in Tamale. Perhaps the close relations between the CPP and the Gulkpe-Na had forced the NPP to look elsewhere for a traditional foundation upon which to build their campaign, but alliances created were in many respects glaring contradictions. The Gulkpe-Na, who, we have seen in a previous chapter, had the Ya Na to thank for his presence in Tamale, found himself backed by and backing a political party which vilified the Ya Na – while the Dakpema, who, from the point of view of 'traditional' Dagbon political structures, as an imposter, found himself backed by and backing a political party whose campaign was based on the idea that 'tradition' needed to be consolidated. Tamale's local political elite reacted not only to the developments taking place on the national and regional level, but the divisions created forced them also to react to each other.

In 1957, with the CPP in power, the campaign against Abudulai began in earnest. Allassani held a public speech in Yendi on market-day, announcing that government

[38] Staniland, *Lions*, 141.

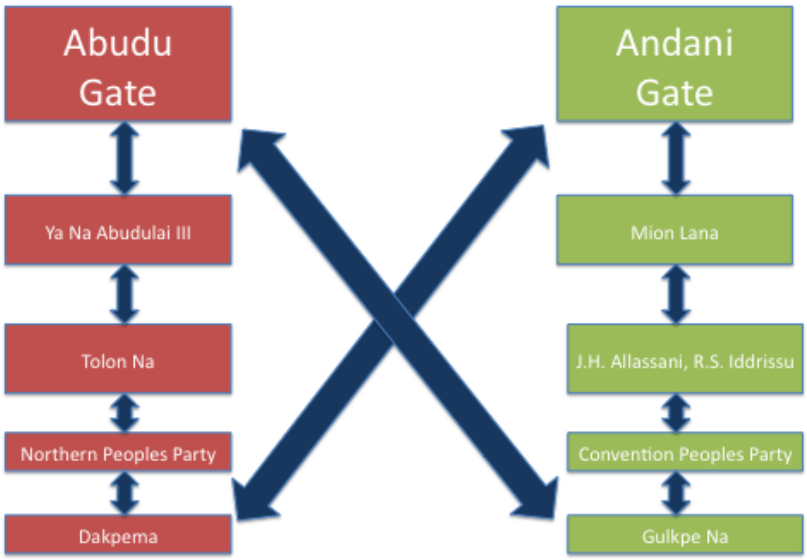
would depose Abudulai on the grounds that he was ‘deformed’ (blind in one eye and allegedly with six toes on one foot) and that his succession had not been in accordance with custom, namely, the rotational basis. Fifty mostly CPP activists signed a petition to de-skin Ya Na Abudulai. Interestingly, the most noteworthy signatories were Allassani, Salifu Yakubu (Yo Na), and MP for Tamale, R.S. Iddrissu. Opposing the petition were brother of the Gulkpe-Na, Yahaya Iddi, S.I. Iddrissu, and Ebenezer Adam, who all gave their support to Ya Na Abudulai. Yahaya Iddi, the brother of the Gulkpe-Na, had been a close associate of Ebenezer Adam within the Tamale branch of the CPP. He had been a member of Ebenezer Adam’s CPP ‘youth faction’, which had campaigned against R.S. Iddrissu during the 1954 elections, which R.S. Iddrissu subsequently lost to the MAP. We may draw one of two conclusions from the alignment of Ebenezer Adam with the Abudu Gate, especially given that the Gulkpe-Na had supported R.S. Iddrissu in the 1954 and 1956 elections, and R.S. Iddrissu in turn supported Allassani in his crusade to de-skin the incumbent (Abudu) Ya Na: Either the Gulkpe-Na was not at all influenced by his brother’s political affiliations (or vice versa), or the Gulkpe-Na, who had been reintroduced to Tamale on the insistence in 1920 of Abudulai II, an uncle of the incumbent Abudulai III, did not share R.S. Iddrissu’s support of Allassani and his anti-Abudu rhetoric. The second conclusion, although not possible to verify, is the most plausible. It suggests also that the Gulkpe-Na and the Dakpema positioned themselves also in relation to each other, given that the Dakpema had aligned himself with the NPP (this is, conversely, equally as contradictory as the Gulkpe-Na aligning himself with an anti-Abudu CPP).

From the perspective of Tamale’s ruling elite, the relationship between local, regional, national, and traditional politics. The subsections reveals that the political aspirations of Tamale’s traditional elite contradicted each other at various levels: The local, regional, national, and traditional political positions taken up by Tamale’s traditional elite made for an uncomfortable mixture. This was in part because the Gulkpe-Na and the Dakpema reacted also to one another.

The politics of urban space

Urbanisation itself was, for a number of reasons, a political determinant. The formation of the TUC in 1952 was an important step in creating a municipal governance apparatus. But the rate of urbanisation endowed this organ with considerable power, as disputes arose over the allocation of urban space.

7.6. Interactions between local, regional, national, and traditional political structures.



The TUC was the Local Authority for Tamale, based on the recommendations set out by the Coussey Committee, as outlined above. The TUC had its first meeting in May 1952. The minutes of TUC meetings depict a rather banal organization. Within the mundane discussions of the TUC, however, significant influence unquestionably simmered. The TUC was responsible for planning and building various public services, such as water and sewerage facilities, an industrial area, and market stalls. The TUC was also represented by four of its members on the Sanitation Board. All

buildings in Tamale, including that of residences of individuals, needed to be approved by the Tamale Sanitation Board (TSB). The fact that two-thirds of TUC members were directly elected meant that the influence of chiefly institutions was limited, which in turn opened the door for the CPP to dominate the TUC. Indeed, prominent CPP members filled high-ranking positions within the TUC. Ebenezer Adam, for instance, was elected chairman of the TUC, while R.S. Iddrissu was also heavily involved. Both Ebenezer Adam and R.S. Iddrissu represented the TUC on the TSB, an extremely powerful organ in Tamale which granted (or refused) building permits. Both Ebenezer Adam and R.S. Iddrissu also sat on the Finance Committee. R.S. Iddrissu also represented the TUC at the District Council in Yendi. Although the chief of Tamale, the Gulkpe-Na, was the president of the TUC, minutes of TUC meetings suggest that he was not a particularly active member. The minutes suggest that the only TUC meeting at which the Gulkpe-Na was present was the second meeting, on 16 June 1952. At that meeting, the Chairman 'assured the Gulkpe-Na and his elders that the elected councillors were anxious to work hand in hand and in full co-operation with the chief, his elders, and all the people'.[39]

The TUC was formed prior to the 1954 election, and one may ask if their influence on Tamale's local politics was not the same in each of the elections in 1954 and 1956? The answer is a resounding No. The CPP's approach to the two elections in the north was different. It was clear after the 1954 election that northerners were generally not moved by the great themes of decolonisation, which motivated southern voters. As a result, the CPP campaign in the north for the 1956 election had a far more local emphasis. "They sent E. A. Mahama and Sumani Bukari, two northern MLAs, to the north to make recommendations concerning candidates … they took local factors into consideration: 'why a person must win, or why this man would stand a better chance that that one'"[40] Within the context of a new emphasis on local factors, the CPP-dominated TUC took on new significance. Ebenezer Adam describes the TUC as "not at all a political organ".[41] However, its influence in terms

[39] PRAAD, Tamale, NRG 8/5/82. (Minutes of the Tamale Urban Council), June 16th, 1952.
[40] Interview with E.A. Mahama, in Ladouceur, *Chiefs*, 144.
[41] Interview with Ebenezer Adam.

of the party politics in Tamale can hardly be disputed. All building in Tamale, both private and commercial, needed to pass through the TUC. In the context of significant demographic and economic expansion, the power to decide what gets built where and by whom is hardly irrelevant. This power was exploited in order to make political gains in Tamale. For instance, the Chief Market Dues Collector of the Tamale Central Market, Allassan Dagomba, wrote to the Secretary of the Dagomba State Council:

> As Market Master, I am to be looking after the interest of the people in the market … Two men approached me for the space to put up a temporary shed, I provided them a space, and the said Issah pulled down the two shed. I reported the matter to … the Native Administration's office, Tamale, he sent a Native Administration's Police to … enquire into the cause of his action, but the Native Administration's Police returned that Iddrissu the Tamale Chairman of the C.P.P have told him not to attend the call.[42]

Another, perhaps even less nuanced example of the manner in which the TUC and CPP interacted with one another is that of Salifu Dagomba, a cigarette vendor by trade, who wrote a letter to the Assistant District Commissioner of Tamale:

> … I began to trade at the Tamale Lorry Park with some other men since 10 years ago … I always pay 2 pence per day until I was asked by the Chief of Lamshegu to pay two shillings and 6 pence for the Hawkers License and I did so … This morning … he again and asked that he does not want anybody to sit there anymore and that we should all go to the market which I found it impossible to go with my bicycle that I hire in addition, and I cannot join the C.P.P. His son saying Mr. Idirisu requested that we should all join the C.P.P., which may enable us to sit there which is by the road. [43]

The rise in prominence of the TUC, under the influence of high-ranking CPP elements such as Ebenezer Adam and R.S. Iddrissu, changed the configuration of everyday authority in Tamale. Other forms of authority were challenged (and seen to be challenged) by the TUC, especially since those responsible for running the TUC generally held political convictions which challenged chieftaincy. The kind of exploitations illustrated here were perhaps possible across the Gold Coast, but

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[42] PRAAD, Tamale, NRG 2/4/4. (Complaints) 'Allassan Dagomba, Chief Market Dues Colector, Tamale. Letter to the Secretary, Dagomba State Council, 18th March, 1952' .

[43] PRAAD, Tamale, NRG 2/4/4. (Complaints) 'Letter Salifu Dagomba to Dagomba State Council, 16th July, 1952'

especially so in Tamale, because chieftaincy in Tamale had always been a tenuous concept within a colonial framework which advocated for chieftaincy. The resulting ambiguous character of Tamale's institutional anatomy made it especially susceptible to the kind of the exploitation which the CPP exercised through the TUC.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the relationship between the rise of party politics in the Northern Territories, in Dagbon, and in Tamale. More specifically, the chapter has been concerned with why Tamale 'kept to itself politically' in the years between 1948 and Ghana's independence in 1957. The chapter has argued that Tamale's political landscape became increasing complex and congested. Tamale's institutional multiplicity, discussed in a previous chapter, was exploited and thus consolidated, reinforced, and expanded. The formation of the TUC, the arrival of party politics on the local scene, and the alliances between the NPP and the Dakpema and between the Gulkpe-Na and the CPP are all examples of this type of exploitation. The increasing complexity and contestation of Tamale's political landscape created an inward-looking political focus. This inward focus, the chapter argues, was exacerbated by tension between local and external alliances. This tension is a major finding of this chapter. Tamale's colonial origins and the subsequent institutional multiplicity complicated the coherency of political alliances on the local level on the one hand, and on traditional, regional, and national levels on the other hand. In this instance, although the alliance between the Gulkpe-Na and the CPP made sense on the local level, on the level of 'traditional' politics the alliance was problematic, as it positioned the Gulkpe-Na in opposition to the Abudu Gate, which had reintroduced the Gulkpe-Na to Tamale between 1920 and 1930.