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Common grounds: urban spaces, everyday religious encounters, and the dynamics and techniques of coexistence in Madina, Accra (1959-Present)
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Chapter 1

Displacements and Relocations: The Making of Madina and Religious Diversity, 1959 to Present.

Introduction

In 1958, the residents of a newly established village in Mile 7 near Shiashie were forcibly relocated to accommodate the construction of an airfield in Accra. They were settled in La Nkwantanang, part of La (Ga) land, where they had to integrate with other migrant communities. This displacement can be traced to the evolution of Accra as the capital of Ghana, which began in 1877 when the colonial headquarters moved from Cape Coast to Accra, prompting a significant influx of migrants and merchants to Accra. By 1958, urban spatial changes became necessary, including the development of infrastructure like airports, trade fair centers, and motorways, as part of modernisation projects aimed at rebranding the post-independent city. A notable outcome of this modernisation was the expansion of Accra's inner core and the establishment of distinct residential enclaves, including Zongo neighbourhoods primarily inhabited by migrants from northern Ghana, Nigeria, and Muslims migrants from the Sahelian regions in West Africa such Burkina Faso, Senegal, Niger, and Mali. The original settlers who founded Madina happened to be part of these newly established Zongo in Accra.¹¹⁷

Since its establishment in 1959, Madina has transformed into a vibrant urban community, recognised for its diverse ethnic, religious and transnational population, coexistence, and significant contributions to Accra's social and economic landscape. Its evolution reflects broader questions of migration, urbanisation, and community resilience, illustrating how displacement can lead to the formation of new identities and neighbourhoods. Hence, understanding Madina's history and development sheds light on the complexities of urban growth in Accra and underscores the resilience and adaptability of communities facing change. The experiences of Madina's residents embody broader historical narratives of migration, identity formation, social inclusion and exclusion, and the interplay of coexistence amidst diversifying cultures within a rapidly

¹¹⁷ For further discussions on the relocation of the capital city from Cape Coast to Accra and the subsequent rebranding of the city of Accra, see for instance, Anthony Ebow Spio, "The City Branding of Accra", in edited by Keith Dinnie, *City Branding: Theory and Cases*, (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 99-101; and Samuel A. Ntewusu, "Before Madina: A Social History of Accra's Madina, Ghana". Paper presented at the "Ghana Studies Association 3rd Triennial Conference, GHANA AS CENTER", at the University of Ghana, 10-13 July 2019.

evolving urban environment. Madina's social and cultural history therefore symbolises a microcosm of the complex and diverse nature of urban life in a modern African city.

This chapter therefore examines the historical development of Madina as a diversifying, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and transnational community within Accra. It examines the consequences of post-independence urban policies, particularly the displacement and relocation of residents due to government regulations. The chapter also analyses the integration of the migrant community into the host community, La Nkwantanang, and its effects on religious and inter-ethnic coexistence since 1959. It emphasises the evolving local diplomatic relations between the La and migrant groups, which have shaped Madina's social and cultural dynamics, thus fostering interactions that promote coexistence. Finally, the chapter reveals how these local diplomatic complexities influence the nature of coexistence among various historical contexts and actors. The chapter draws on a range of sources, including archival documents related to La, oral interviews, newspaper reviews, and relevant literature, all of which are important for the discussion.

The central argument of this chapter is that Madina's historical emergence and transformation into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious community in Accra results from the complex interactions between urban policies, displacement, migration, and evolving local diplomatic relations. It emphasises that these factors have significantly shaped the community's distinct character and demographic composition, and this underscores the importance of understanding their interplay in urban development, diversity, and coexistence.

“May Strangers Come to Join Us”: La Local Diplomatic Policies of Integration

May strangers come to join us; may they come with their wealth, their might, their families, their experience, their ideas, and above all their gods. And may we be enriched spiritually, physically and materially by their presence.¹¹⁸

Any person who belongs to another tribal group is a stranger. But also any person of the same ethnic tribe, but who belongs to another kinship group is treated as a stranger for purposes of land tenure.¹¹⁹

Before examining the historical development of Madina as a community, it is essential to first consider the La local diplomatic policies of integration. These policies provide valuable insights into the historical and evolving relationships between migrant groups and the host community and

¹¹⁸ Irene Odotei, “External Influences On Ga Society and Culture”, *Research Review*, 1&2,(1991): 70

¹¹⁹ PRAAD/ACCRA/ADM 5/4/122, “Gold Coast Land Tenure, Vol. II (Report on Land Tenure in Adangme Customary Law, 1955”.

illuminate how interactions among these diverse groups have shaped coexistence within the Madina community. These diplomatic frameworks offer a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of integration, the negotiation of identities, and the fostering of mutual respect amidst tensions among various social groups in Madina. Such understanding is crucial for promoting coexistence, harmony, and cooperation within a multicultural environment.

The current location of Madina was not the initial choice of the original settlers; they were displaced and relocated from their homes as already indicated. In 1958, Madina was envisioned as an extension of the long-established La outstation village, La Nkwantanang, which is presumed to have been founded in the late 17th century. However, Madina quickly developed separately and outpaced the host community due to initial hostilities from the latter, aimed at discouraging the displaced group from settling in their new area. Despite Nkwantanang predating Madina, both localities have distinct yet interwoven histories. As a migrant settlement, Madina was established on land traditionally owned by the indigenous La people, who belong to one of the six independent Ga ethnic groups in Accra's coastal area.¹²⁰ The acceptance and integration of the displaced groups into the La traditional polity are evident in both the La local diplomatic policies and land governance practices, as emphasised in the first and second quotations above, respectively.

The historical La prayer, referenced in the first quotation above, underscores the paramount importance of La's pre-mid-20th century local diplomatic relations—social, cultural, and political—with migrant ethnic groups. The La people's welcoming and inclusive attitude, as conveyed in their historic prayer, signified their openness to individuals from different ethnic backgrounds joining the La traditional polity. This underscores their readiness to embrace newcomers with varying wealth, family backgrounds, experiences, ideas, and religious beliefs. In short, their local diplomatic policy prioritised an inclusive and open approach that encompassed various dimensions such as religion, material resources, cultural and intellectual exchange, and social bonds. This inclusive attitude also reinforces the indigenous Ghanaian philosophy that “it is the stranger who is used in building a community”. This cultural belief highlights the idea that outsiders often play a crucial role in the growth and development of a community, including

¹²⁰ Joseph Fiifi Fosu-Ankrah, “Kla: A Tutelary Deity at the Jamaica Marketplace in Madina, Accra”, *Material Religion*, 18,4, (2022): 488.

contributing to its expansion and growth. However, this attitude was to change over time due to evolving local politics and land ownership issues.

In the second quote, attention is drawn to the fact that despite the pre-mid-20th century depiction of local diplomatic relations as inclusive, the Ga (La) and, by extension, the Adangme ethnic groups labelled certain individuals as “strangers” based on land ownership. This socio-cultural classification was not limited to different ethnic groups but extended to individuals from the same ethnic background who belonged to different kinship groups. These land tenure practices underscore the complex demographic makeup of the Ga ethnic groups and demonstrate how factors like land ownership and kinship shape an individual’s or group’s social standing and identity within the community. This system reveals that land ownership and kinship were central to social organisation among the Ga ethnic group, emphasising that the category of “strangers” could exist even within the same ethnic community. This complicates the notion of identity based purely on ethnicity and calls for a more nuanced understanding of social hierarchy.

In essence, access to land and one’s kinship ties were crucial in defining inclusion or exclusion from full membership within the community. These dynamics underscore the fluid and multifaceted nature of social identity, where factors such as land rights and lineage contribute to a complex, stratified demographic structure. In this context, individuals of the same ethnic group who did not possess land rights or belong to the same kinship group could be treated as outsiders, thereby complicating the boundaries of social belonging. The interplay of land ownership and kinship reveals deeper layers of social classification, illustrating how both material and relational assets were essential in determining one’s role and status within society. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of land ownership and kinship among the Ga ethnic group is crucial for grasping the complexities of coexistence in Madina. These dynamics significantly shape local political power structures and influence interethnic and interreligious relations.

Nima and Trade Fair: Narratives of Early Settlements, Displacements and Relocations

In the period immediately following independence as pointed out previously, Accra witnessed significant development, including the construction of what is now known as Kotoka International Airport (KIA), Kanda Estates, the Nima Highway, and the Nima redevelopment project.¹²¹ These

¹²¹ The airport was originally called Ghana International Airport but was later renamed Kotoka International Airport in honor of Lieutenant General Emmanuel Kwasi Kotoka. He is believed to have played a key role in the military coup d’état that occurred in Ghana on February 24, 1966, which resulted in the overthrow of the Convention People’s

initiatives resulted in the displacement of numerous residents of Nima, predominantly migrants from northern Ghana and non-Ghanaians from other West African regions such as Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso. Alhaji Seidu Kardo, a leader among these displaced groups, assisted them in acquiring land and settling in Shiashie, a village seven miles north of Accra. However, they were designated as squatters on land previously acquired by the government for the KIA and were subsequently evicted in 1959. At the time of their displacement, approximately 646 houses had already been constructed. Remarkably, the originally planned project never materialised at this location, which has since evolved into the East Legon Residential Area.¹²²

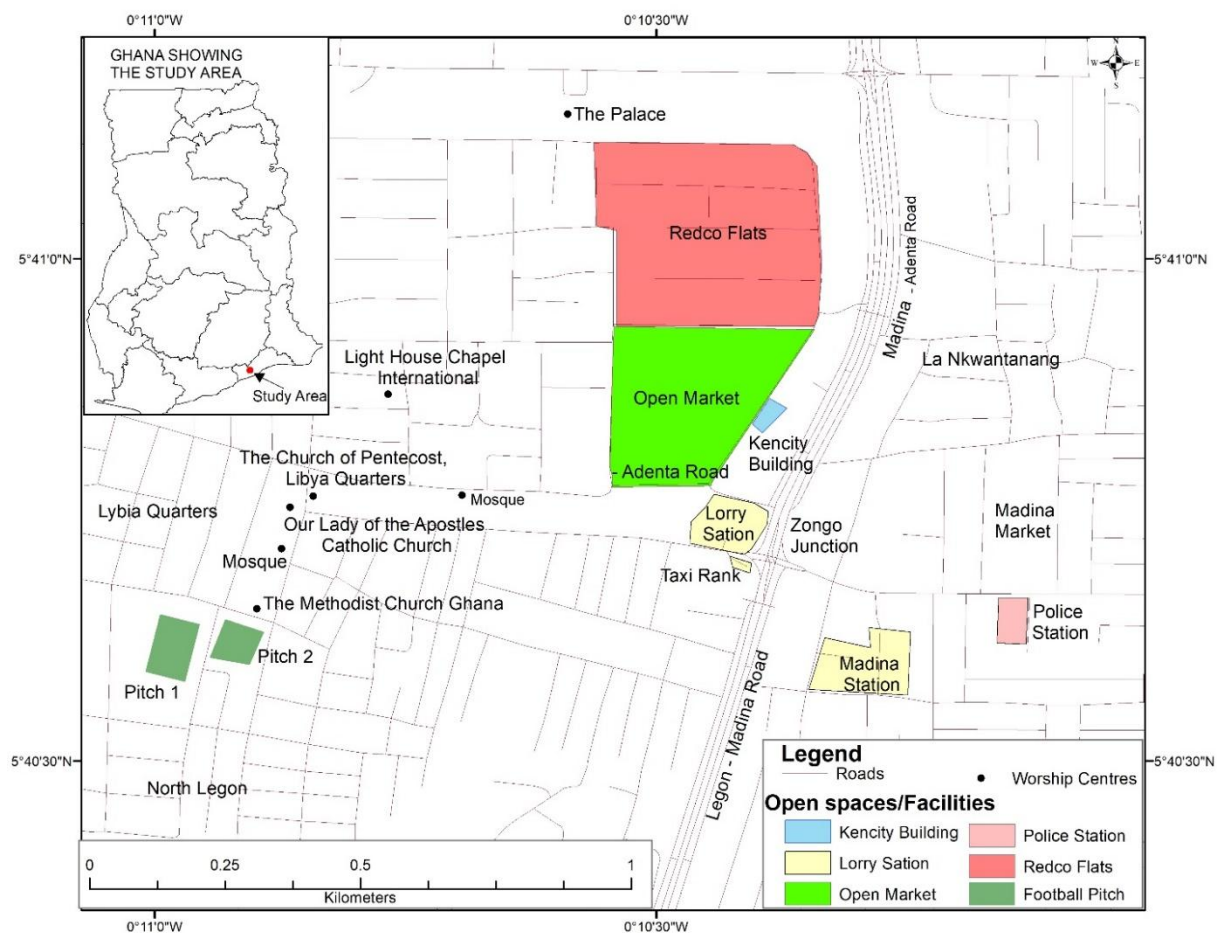


Figure 1: A Map of Madina Showing Research Locations. Source: Author, 2024.

Party government led by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The renaming was intended as a tribute to his significant contributions to the political events of that time.

¹²² Quarcoo, Addo and Peil, *Madina Survey*, 5; Asiama, “Social Analysis, Urbanisation and Land Reform in Ghana”, 1980, 199.

During this same period, the government also initiated plans to construct the Trade Fair Center (TFC) to the east of Labadi, designed as a permanent venue for international trade fairs. This undertaking necessitated the resettlement of residents in that area. Consequently, the government engaged in negotiations with Nii Anyetei Kwakwaranya II, the Mantse (traditional ruler) of Labadi at the time, to secure parcels of land for the resettlement of the designated squatters in Shiashie, as well as the affected and displaced inhabitants of the Trade Fair site.¹²³ The area now known as Madina was chosen for the resettlement of these groups from Nima and Trade Fair due to two primary reasons. First, the Mantse had previously allocated land in the area to a group of Islamic educators planning to establish an Islamic Secondary School in the neighbourhood. Secondly, the government had acquired nearby land for the construction of a Presbyterian Secondary School.¹²⁴ On July 14, 1959, the newly established settlement of Madina was officially inaugurated. By the mid-1970s and early 1980s, Madina experienced rapid development, driven by several contributing factors.¹²⁵

Firstly, Madina's strategic location near various educational institutions made it an attractive residential choice. It provided housing for junior staff and students from notable institutions such as the University of Ghana, the Institute for Professional Studies (now the University for Professional Studies), Accra Training College (now Accra College of Education), and Trinity Theological Seminary, as well as senior members of second-cycle schools. The proximity of Madina to these educational facilities further contributed to its appeal. Secondly, Madina was envisioned as an ideal location for the government's plan to develop it into a model township that would incorporate the nearby villages of Nkwantanang and Atiman.¹²⁶ The third factor driving Madina's expansion was the availability of affordable land in the community, which was particularly appealing to retired soldiers and other government officials.¹²⁷ Additionally, Madina

¹²³ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019. He is the cousin and was the personal secretary for Alhaji Chief Seidu Kardo, founder of the Madina community. He, together with the surveyor, supervised the allocation of plots to the new settlers in the newly founded Madina community.

¹²⁴ RG 15/1/2161, "Land Acquired for the Service of the Colony Situated at Post Nine (9) on the Accra Dodowa Road for the Presbyterian School, Vol.1"; Ntewusu, "Co-Existence in Turbulent Times", 375-376.

¹²⁵ RG 15/1/2161, "Land Acquired for the Service of the Colony Situated at Post Nine (9) on the Accra Dodowa Road for the Presbyterian School, Vol.1".

¹²⁶ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019; Ntewusu, "Co-Existence in Turbulent Times", 377-378; Ntewusu, "The Northern Factor in Accra", 33.

¹²⁷ Interview with Gabriel Apejie, Madina, January 8, 2019. He has been in Madina for over forty years. He used to work with the Ghana Water and Sewage Company in Legon. Interview with Beatrice Dankwa, Madina, January 8, 2019. She has lived in Madina with her late husband for over thirty five years. They relocated from Burma Camp to Madina where her husband retired as a military officer. Interview with Agnes Brown, Madina, 14th January, 2019a.

became a haven and destination for individuals from the northern regions of Ghana, especially during the mid-1980s and early 1990s. These periods were marked by persistent land disputes, inter-ethnic tensions, and chieftaincy conflicts in the Northern region. These conflicts led to the loss of lives and property in the affected areas. Consequently, many residents were displaced and compelled to migrate to the southern regions of the country, making Madina an important destination for those fleeing for their lives.¹²⁸

In addition to the aforementioned conflicts in the Northern region, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) implemented during the 1980s and 1990s under the leadership of Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings also played a significant role in shaping migration patterns. Although the SAPs were intended to benefit rural communities in Ghana, their execution had unintended consequences, particularly for urban centers, as they encouraged migration. The SAPs comprised three key components: economic liberalisation, privatisation, and a general restructuring of the state's role in the economy. These policies aimed to integrate Ghana more deeply into the global economy by relaxing trade restrictions on imports. However, this liberalisation adversely affected rural economies, contributing to the growth of towns and cities through migration, especially towards Accra. One major consequence of the SAPs was the removal of subsidies on agriculture, a critical sector for the predominantly agrarian rural economy. This change significantly impacted the rural population, as production costs soared, discouraging many youths from pursuing agriculture. Faced with limited opportunities in their home regions, a considerable number chose to migrate to urban areas, where they often engaged in menial jobs or street vending to make a living.¹²⁹

During this period, Madina had already emerged as one of the prominent Zongos in Accra and thus became a good choice for many migrants.¹³⁰ For instance, the proliferation of various types of kiosks and head porters (*kayaye*) on the streets of the community is, in part, a consequence of the influx of new migrants who were compelled to relocate from rural areas due to certain

She also relocated to Madina in the early 1970s after her husband retired from the military. The other sixty-five Ewes interviewed for this study, like these three, also cited the availability and affordability of land in Madina as key reasons for their decision to relocate to the community.

¹²⁸ Ntewusu, "Co-Existence in Turbulent Times", 376-377.

¹²⁹ Ntewusu, "Co-Existence in Turbulent Times", 377. For detailed discussions on the SAPs see Jeffrey Herbst, *The Politics of Reform in Ghana, 1982-1991*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993); and Richard Aidoo (ed.), *The Politics of Economic Reform in Ghana*, (New York, NY : Routledge, 2019), 13-27.

¹³⁰ Ntewusu, "Co-Existence in Turbulent Times", 377; Quayson, "Oxford Street, Accra", 204.

unfavourable policies like those discussed previously.¹³¹ Today, Madina is widely recognised as one of the prominent Zongos in Accra and throughout Ghana, as earlier noted in Chapter 1.¹³² It is bordered by the University of Ghana to the southwest, Adenta and Ashale Botwe to the north and northeast, and Haatso to the west. The Madina Township is divided into two parts by the Accra-Adenta-Dodowa-Aburi Road, with the eastern section referred to as Old Zongo and the western section known as New Zongo (Madina West) which is the focus of this study.¹³³

The Original Planning of the Madina Community

Madina's original development plan, proposed by a government-appointed committee, allocated 64 hectares for a population of 3,300, with designated areas for housing, services, and industry. However, the planned development did not materialise, and Madina evolved as an unplanned settlement. This was largely due to the displaced residents hastily constructing homes to secure their plots, driven by the fear of being ejected again. While some recommendations, like plot sizes, were followed, they had little impact on the community's overall appearance. A Master Plan was later created by the Town and Country Planning Department in the 1960s, but the township's actual development deviated from it, resulting in disorganised growth and inadequate access roads.¹³⁴ Despite these challenges, Madina developed a strong transportation system that connects it to Accra and neighbouring areas.

The failure to implement most of the planning committee's recommendations in Madina can be attributed to its jurisdiction under the Ga Local Council (GLC) at the time. Unlike the Accra City Council, the GLC lacked the administrative capacity to effectively control and coordinate development. As a result, Madina did not receive essential amenities like roads and drains that would have been provided within Accra.¹³⁵

To address the development challenges in Madina, Alhaji Seidu Kardo organised a group of landowners and formed the Madina Town Development Committee, with himself as chairman. The committee collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development,

¹³¹ See for example Mariama Zaami, "Gendered Strategies among Northern Migrants in Ghana: The Role of Social Networks", *Ghana Journal of Geography*, Vol. 12, (2), 2020:1-24; Mariam Zaami, "Gendered Strategies among Migrants from Northern Ghana in Accra: A Case Study of Madina", MPhil Thesis, University of Bergen, Norway, 2010.

¹³² Pellow, *Landlords and Lodgers*, 38.

¹³³ Quarcoo, Addo and Peil, *Madina Survey*, 1; Ntewusu, "The Northern Factor in Accra", 33; Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*, 444.

¹³⁴ Interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019. See also Quarcoo, Addo and Peil, *Madina Survey*, 10-15

¹³⁵ Interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019.

which provided technical assistance and machinery to facilitate development and the provision of amenities. A building surveyor ensured that construction adhered to proper standards, contributing to the orderly development of the township. Through communal labour and financial contributions by residents, the committee successfully implemented key projects such as roads, a post office, and a government school. Residents not only provided financial support but also offered specialised skills, significantly reducing costs. The Department of Social Welfare played a vital role in providing technical aid to make these efforts successful. This proactive approach, driven by Seidu Kardo's leadership, shaped Madina's development.¹³⁶

In the 1960 national population census, Madina did not appear as a distinct settlement. However, by 1967, estimates by Quarcoo et al. suggested a population of around 2,000.¹³⁷ Unfortunately, no data on the number of houses at that time is available. In the 1970 population census, Madina was officially recognised, with a population of 7,480 living in 843 houses, reflecting a significant growth in both population and housing since the 1967 estimates.¹³⁸ According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC), the population of La Nkwantanang-Madina Municipality (LaNMMA) is 111,926.¹³⁹ Females constitute 57,655 individuals, representing 51.5 per cent of the population, while males number 54,271, or 48.5 per cent. Approximately 84 per cent of the municipality's population lives in urban areas.¹⁴⁰

According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC), the population of LaNMMA is now 244,676, comprising 120,846 males (49.39 per cent) and 123,830 females (50.61 per cent). Approximately 85 per cent of the population resides in urban areas.¹⁴¹ However, the above data is not limited to the Madina West area where this study was undertaken.¹⁴² The data from 2010 to 2021 indicates that LaNMMA has undergone demographic shifts, marked by a more balanced gender distribution and an increasing urban population. These changes have significant

¹³⁶ Personal interview with Grace Afoley Odai, Madina, 20th December, 2019. She was the former Queenmother of the Old Madina Market. She occupied the position for over three decades. She succeeded her mother as the market queen.

¹³⁷ Quarcoo, Addo and Peil, *Madina Survey*, 1

¹³⁸ Ntewusu, "The Northern Factor in Accra", 33

¹³⁹ Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), *2010 Population and Housing Census District Analytical Report: La Nkwantanang-Madina Municipality*, (Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, 2014), ix and 17

¹⁴⁰ GSS, *2010 Population and Housing Census District Analytical Report*, 17

¹⁴¹ GSS, *Ghana Housing and Population Census, General Report, Volume 3A-Populations of Regions and Districts*, (Accra: GSS, 2021), 44, 81 and 102

¹⁴² Obtaining data specifically analyzing the population of Madina West proved difficult.

implications for local governance, infrastructure development, and social relations, as well as religious coexistence, as the municipality adapts to its evolving demographics.

Land Acquisition in Madina in the Early Periods

In the early years of Madina, there was a nearly equal distribution of homeowners and tenants across different ethnic origins. The Ewe people represented a higher percentage among both groups, while individuals from the Northern and Upper Regions made up a smaller proportion. The township showed a diverse population from all regions of Ghana. Notably, the Akan language emerged as the lingua franca of the settlement. I will revisit the significance of the language factor and its associated politics in Madina in subsequent sections.¹⁴³

The distribution of land in Madina occurred in three stages. Initially, land was allocated to resettlers from Nima, a process overseen by Alhaji Seidu Kardo on behalf of the La Mantse. This initial allocation formed the core of the township, centered around Kardo's former residence. He engaged a licensed land surveyor to demarcate the plots, but irregular measurements led to varying sizes, with some plots significantly larger than others. Notably, the residences of Alhaji Seidu Kardo, the surveyor, and other chiefs were approximately three times the average size, while some houses were built on plots so small that little space separated them.¹⁴⁴

Following the allocation of plots to the resettlers from Nima, the second stage involved providing land for resettlers from the Trade Fair site. This group, like the Nima settlers, was led by a settlement leader responsible for land distribution. The plots assigned were also irregular in size, with fees charged for the allocations. For both groups, the land acquisition process was relatively straightforward. The involvement of their leaders in all aspects meant they faced no challenges from landowners and encountered no competition, as the land was exclusively available for their use. The cost of acquiring land was minimal, and the acquisition period was short; in many cases, land was allocated even before the settlers had a chance to view it. Although their interests were secured informally, they believed the government had granted them the land as compensation for the plots taken from them at Nima and the Trade Fair site. Notably, they had not

¹⁴³ Personal interview with Michael Oforu Brown, Madina, 17th September, 2019; interview with Esinam Kudedze, Madina, 25th March, 2019. Oforu Brown was a Police Inspector at the 37 Police Station and relocated to Madina in the early 1970s with his parents after his father retired from the Ghana Armed Forces. Similarly, Esinam Kudedze moved to Madina with her family during the 1970s when her father, an army officer stationed in Takoradi, retired.

¹⁴⁴ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019.

received compensation for the land in their previous settlements when it was acquired; instead, compensation was directed to the stools holding the absolute title to the land.¹⁴⁵

After meeting the land needs of the initial two groups, restrictions on accessibility were lifted, making land available to anyone interested. Individuals seeking to acquire land in Madina during this phase were unorganised, resulting in a different process than that of the first two groups. Prospective grantees would approach Alhaji Seidu Kardo to schedule an appointment for land allocation, typically set for the following Sunday. Alhaji Seidu Kardo, in collaboration with the Mantse, engaged the services of the licensed surveyor originally tasked with demarcating land in the settlement. The surveyor worked between 6 AM and noon on Sundays to distribute plots. On the designated Sunday, individuals gathered at the settlement, where plots were demarcated and allocated to grantees. Some grantees could also present themselves at the site without an appointment and be served on the spot. This streamlined process allowed for quick land acquisition, often taking only a few hours.¹⁴⁶

To address various issues, stricter controls were eventually implemented in the land allocation process in Madina. Each grantee was limited to one plot, and developers who failed to initiate construction within three months of acquisition would have their plots deemed abandoned and reallocated by Alhaji Seidu Kardo. A longer acquisition period was introduced to ensure that only committed individuals were granted plots, as Kardo believed that persistence indicated a genuine need for land. Investors who were discouraged after a few visits were likely to withdraw.¹⁴⁷ It is important to note that neither the Mantse of Labadi nor Alhaji Seidu Kardo consciously sought to restrict access to any specific group. The significant presence of individuals from the Volta and Eastern Regions, as well as those engaged in commerce, can be attributed to how information about available land in Madina spread.¹⁴⁸

The significant presence of Ewe individuals in Madina dates back to the early 1960s. These groups came from various locations in the Volta Region, such as Peki, Aflao, Agortime, Kpando, and Sogakokpe. Many were already living in different parts of Accra, including Kokomlemle, Adabraka, Newtown, Burma Camp, and Osu, while some had migrated from places like Tarkwa,

¹⁴⁵ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019. See also Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*, 448-49.

¹⁴⁶ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019

¹⁴⁷ Quarcoo et al, *Madina Survey*, 17-21

¹⁴⁸ For example, 57 of 68 Ewe participants interviewed for this study, conducted between January 8 and March 27, 2019, indicated that they learned about the availability of affordable land in Madina through colleagues or relatives.

Bolgatanga, and Obuasi. The early Ewe settlers primarily worked in government service across sectors such as the military, agriculture, mining, police, sanitation, and water and sewage services. Many of these individuals had retired from their positions, making the availability of land in Madina appealing for their retirement. Additionally, several women were involved in the fish trade. In the late 1990s, a new wave of Ewe migrants arrived in Madina, consisting mainly of individuals employed in various educational institutions in and around the neighbourhood. This influx diversified the occupational profile of the Ewe community. Some of these Ewe migrants are also involved in various professions, including driving, with a few participating in professional football. Lucas Bosu emerged as the first chief among these new settlers.¹⁴⁹

Land Prices and the Construction of Houses in the Early Stages

After 1973, land prices in Madina rose significantly for three primary reasons. First, the limited availability of land, as much had already been allocated, contributed to this increase. Second, the government's reduced influence over traditional landowners, particularly the Mantse of Labadi, stemmed from a policy shift after 1969, which granted chiefs greater autonomy in land management without government interference. This change followed the coup that ousted Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. Finally, the lateral expansion of Accra improved accessibility to Madina, further driving up demand for land in the area.¹⁵⁰

In the years following 1973, many land plots allocated in Madina began to be situated on the outskirts of the township. This shift occurred because these lands fell outside the influence of Alhaji Seidu Kardo and were managed directly by the Mantse. Despite this change, Alhaji Seidu Kardo continued to serve as the Mantse's agent, facilitating land allocations in these areas and collecting payments. Grantees acquired land by presenting "allocation notes" from the Mantse, which instructed Alhaji Seidu Kardo to allocate specific plots to them. This allocation process remained in place until the formal establishment of the La Lands Committee in 1964, which subsequently influenced land management practices in Madina.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹For example, interviews conducted with Ewes in Madina including those on January 8 and 14, 2019 respectively, reveal insights into the Ewe community's migration patterns. Veronica Sevor noted that her late father, C.K. Clement Sevor, a retired military officer, was the first spokesperson for the Ewe chief. Agnes Brown, whose late husband was a captain in the Ghana Armed Forces, shared that they relocated to Madina after his retirement from the military.

¹⁵⁰ Asiamah, "Social Analysis, Urbanisation and Land Reform in Ghana", 213-214.

¹⁵¹ Quarcoo et al, *Madina Survey*, 21-22; PRAAD/ACCRA/RG 15/1/2161, "Land Acquired for the Service of the Colony situate at Post Nine (9) on the Accra-Dodowa Road for the Presbyterian School, Vol 1".

The construction of houses in Madina gained momentum between 1958 and 1959, driven by an immediate need for lodgings. These periods coincided with the commencement of the Trade Fair Center building project and the government's plans to relocate Nima settlers from their Shiashie settlement, as previously discussed. In addition to these immediate factors, another contributing element influenced the development pattern and speed of construction in the township: Alhaji Seidu Kardo's access to land. He did not receive any legal documents officially assigning the land to him, which heightened his awareness of the potential risk that the Mantse could change his mind and reclaim the land. This concern became more pronounced in the early 1960s when the initial settlers faced strong opposition from the chief and the people of Nkwantanang village, who asserted that the lands of Madina belonged to their lineage.¹⁵² In light of these challenges, Alhaji Seidu Kardo recognised that the risk of eviction would decrease if the development of the township progressed rapidly. As a result, grantees of land in Madina promptly initiated the development of their plots as soon as they gained access to them.

The primary challenge regarding land in Madina in the early 1960s was the uncertainty of title. While the individuals building houses were not squatters, many lacked clarity about the nature of their land interests. Research on land reform in Ghana, particularly focusing on land tenure in Madina, revealed that a significant proportion of inhabitants faced uncertainty regarding their land tenure titles. For example, when residents were asked to describe their land tenure status, 71% claimed they held freehold titles, 27% assumed they held leasehold interests from the Mantse, and 2% believed they were occupying family land. This last group identified as La citizens. Although the absence of clear titles did not immediately pose issues of title insecurity, it did present other challenges for homeowners in Madina.¹⁵³

Firstly, the lack of clear title documentation posed a challenge to landowners in terms of financial security. Without secure titles, landowners could not use their property as collateral to obtain financial assistance from any financial institution. These institutions typically required clear evidence of ownership to verify the owner's credibility and to take possession of the property in case of default. Secondly, in the event of compulsory land acquisition by the state or compensation

¹⁵² Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019; Quarcoo et al, *Madina Survey*, 16. A detailed account of this development has also been narrated by Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*, 447-48.

¹⁵³ Asiama, "Social Analysis, Urbanisation and Land Reform in Ghana", 234-235

claims, affected owners in the township might have faced difficulties. The absence of clearly defined interests, such as title deeds, meant they had no evidence to support their claims. This lack of defined interests could have complicated legal processes related to land acquisition or compensation.

Despite these challenges, homeowners developed their properties without clear titles, which did not diminish their confidence in the security of their interests. However, the lack of clearly defined titles could still lead to complications in certain legal situations. Additionally, the absence of a formal title did not prevent homeowners from selling their properties. As long as the seller could present original purchase receipts endorsed by the chief of Madina, the transaction was typically accepted, and the new purchaser's name was recorded.

Initial Disputes: The Politics of Place Naming

Place names carry deep social, cultural, and political importance in African societies, especially among the ethnic groups in Ghana. Socially, these names encapsulate a community's history and traditions and reinforce group identity and ancestry. Culturally, place names are tied to rituals, ceremonies, and events that strengthen communal bonds, preserving language and imparting stories, values, and moral teachings that reflect the community's worldview. Symbolically, they convey spiritual beliefs or references to natural landscapes and mythological themes which serve as historical markers of migrations, conflicts, and social changes that educate future generations about their heritage. Politically, place naming is a powerful means for asserting identity and political autonomy, particularly in contexts of colonialism or political marginalisation. Reclaiming indigenous names allows communities to resist external influences and also affirms their cultural presence within an evolving urban landscape. Historically shared community name promotes social cohesion and collective memory, while at the same creating a vital link between the community's past and its aspirations for the future.

However, naming or renaming places is a deeply political act, particularly in contexts involving migrants and host communities. In such cases, naming becomes a means of othering and ordering spaces and the identities or groups that inhabit them. It is a powerful tool that shapes identities, hierarchies, and relationships between people and places. The politics of naming or renaming often reflect entrenched power dynamics, where names serve as instruments of domination, embedding stereotypes and controlling populations. By imposing names, authorities or groups construct narratives of superiority and inferiority, thus shaping how people interact with

both space and each other. The case of Madina illustrates how such dynamics unfolded and how the migrant community resisted certain attempts at erasure and domination.

Historically, colonial powers renamed African spaces to reflect their dominance, hence erasing indigenous identities and imposing Eurocentric systems of thought. These names were not neutral; they carried stereotypes that framed indigenous populations as inferior or uncivilised. Even in postcolonial Africa, the act of naming remains tied to internal power struggles, ethnic tensions, and the assertion of authority.

In Madina, the tension between the host La community and migrant residents highlights these dynamics. As traditional custodians of the land, the La community sought to rename Madina to assert their ownership and cultural authority. For them, the act of renaming symbolised order and control over the perceived “otherness” of the migrant population. However, for Madina’s residents, accepting an imposed name meant surrendering their identity and agency.

For the La, place naming was more than a practical task; it was an expression of identity, culture, and political agency. Naming and renaming places sought to reinforce their heritage, assert cultural and political authority, strengthen community unity, and challenge perceived political injustices and distorted historical narratives that perpetuate stereotypes. Hence, these acts of place naming provide valuable historical insights into the social and cultural dynamics within the La community that highlight the intersection of culture, politics and coexistence within the contemporary urban landscape of Accra.

The coexistence of Ga place names alongside those from other cultural and linguistic groups reflects Accra’s multicultural identity which indicates that the city values all its residents and their heritage. However, place naming can also spark tensions and public discussions among these various cultural groups, particularly between host communities and migrants. These discussions, even when contentious, help break down misunderstandings and stereotypes, and foster mutual respect and understanding. Consequently, place names provide valuable insight into the city’s diverse history, values, and communities, especially among the La people and Madina.

Between 1990 and 1993, a dispute emerged in the print media over the names “Labadi” and “Madina”. Leaders of the La traditional state argued that “Labadi”, referring to the La capital, was an offensive corruption of its true name and should simply be referred to as “La”. They also called for “Madina”, the new settlement, to be renamed “La Hee”, meaning “New La”. While the first name change (La) was widely accepted, the second (Madina) has been largely overlooked. This

public debate has significant implications. On February 27, 1991, the *People's Daily Graphic* published an article about the installation of Ga chiefs, stating that “La” is one of the largest Ga states, and its main township has erroneously been referred to as “Labadi”. The article aimed to correct what they considered a derogatory name, promoting “La” as the accurate designation. During this time, the La State administration made concerted efforts to encourage the adoption of the correct name.¹⁵⁴ The name change was also reported in *The Mirror* on October 12, 1991, that featured a statement from La Mantse, Nii Kpobi Tettey Tsuru III, which emphasised the significance of this rebranding effort. It started:

“Labadi” is a corrupted form of La, the original name of the town and its people, coined by the early Europeans in the then Gold Coast. According to an oral tradition, the La people migrated from a place called Bonne [sic], between present day Benin and Nigeria. At one point in time, after migrating to the then Gold Coast, they were said to be referring to their resettlement as La Bonne, fashioned from the name of the tribe and ancestral home. The Europeans with their faint knowledge of the language and history of the people misconstrued the “Bonne” of the La people to mean “bone” (bad) in Twi and concluded to call the place “Labad” which later metamorphosed into “Labadi”.¹⁵⁵

The debate continued, with further clarifications made in a *Mirror* column on December 21, 1991. This article highlighted the historical connection to colonial domination, specifically recalling the British bombardment of Labadi and other Ga states, including Teshie and Osu, in 1854.¹⁵⁶ In response to a petition, numerous public notices in the town were updated, changing “Labadi” to “La” by simply omitting the last four letters. As a result, “La” has become the favoured term used by newspapers, replacing “Labadi”.¹⁵⁷ Today, “La” refers to an ethnic group among the Ga and a location in Accra.

The story of Madina unfolds differently and must be understood within its historical context. The new community was officially named Madina after the La Mantse and his Council approved

¹⁵⁴ Daniel Kondor, “Installing a Chief in Ga with Reference to the La”, *People Daily Graphic*, 27th February, 1991,7

¹⁵⁵ Dornu Adjokatcher, “Ga Traditional Council Goes Indigenous, *The Mirror*, 12th October, 1991,3

¹⁵⁶ J.P. Okang, “Is it La or Labadi”, *The Mirror*, 21st December, 1991,4

¹⁵⁷ A sociolinguistic historical analysis of the issue under discussion has also been provided by Mary Esther Kropp Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea: A Sociolinguistic History of Accra*, (Oxford: OUP,1997), 5-7

Alhaji Seidu Kardo's request during a function on October 22, 1959, chaired by Nii Anyetey Kwakwaranya II, the La Mantse. However, protests against the name arose, particularly from the Klanaa division of La, which had repeatedly contested the La stool's rights over this land since the early 20th century.¹⁵⁸ The name "Madina" was upheld by a Paul Tagoe Commission established in July 1964 to investigate the claims of the Klanaa division. To support its findings, the Commission referenced precedents of places in and around Accra—such as Adabraka, Mallam, and Fadama—that had also been named in Hausa or Hausa-ised Arabic by their founders. As a concession to local sentiments, the spelling "Madina" was adopted instead of "Medina" (the Arabic word for "city"), as "Madina" was perceived to be less explicitly Muslim.¹⁵⁹

The resistance of Madina's residents to this renaming effort is emblematic of broader struggles for recognition and belonging in postcolonial urban centers. By rejecting the imposed name, they asserted their right to self-determination and challenged the stereotypes embedded in the host community's narrative. This resistance reveals the dual nature of naming: while it can be a tool for establishing hierarchies, it also provokes counter-narratives that contest such hierarchies.

Madina's case underlines a broader reality in African societies, where place-naming or renaming reflects continuing tensions between inclusion and exclusion, dominance and resistance. Naming and renaming is not a neutral administrative act; it is deeply political, and tied to questions of power, identity, and belonging. The refusal of Madina's residents to accept an imposed name exemplifies the resilience of marginalised communities. It demonstrates how naming, though a potent tool of control, can also become a site of resistance and reclamation, where communities assert their dignity and rightful place within the social order.

Accordingly, in 1964, Alhaji Seidu Kardo officially assumed the role of headman (migrant chief) of Madina, a position conferred upon him by the First Parliamentary Secretary, Paul Tagoe, with the consent of the La Council and the La Mantse.¹⁶⁰ By the 1990s, each ethnic group had its own community head, and Alhaji Seidu's son, Baaba, gained recognition as the Chief of Madina among some of these groups. However, by 1966, discontent had become evident among the different ethnic groups, particularly between the Ewe people and ethnic groups from Northern

¹⁵⁸ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019; Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 8; Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religions in Ghana*, 449-452; Quarcoo et al, *Madina Survey*, 4-5, 22

¹⁵⁹ Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 8; Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religions in Ghana*, 449-52.

¹⁶⁰ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019

Ghana.¹⁶¹ Despite these tensions, there has always been clarity regarding the allodial rights to the land, which the La Mantse and the La state hold.¹⁶² I will revisit the institution of migrant chiefs in Madina later in this chapter.

Linguistic Demography in Madina and Hidden Tensions

The disputes discussed in the previous section extend beyond the mere contestation of place names; they are deeply rooted in historical politics and motivated by various factors, including language. Since the mid-1970s, Madina has been recognised as a polyglot community, where nearly everyone speaks two or more languages, and over half of the population speaks at least three.¹⁶³ In a sociolinguistic study of Accra, Dakubu highlights that, according to the 1966 population census, the proportions of non-Ghanaians, northern Ghanaians, and Ga plus Dangme had dropped to 14%, 5%, and 12%, respectively. In contrast, the sizes of the Akan and Ewe populations had increased dramatically to 31% and 38%, respectively. When comparing this with the 1970 census, she notes that the population of non-Ghanaians decreased to about 12%, while the proportion of Ga plus Dangme may have increased slightly to almost 19%.¹⁶⁴ These population dynamics were, and continue to be, significant as they influence La's relationship with the new settlers in Madina.

In the late 1990s, it was observed that the Ga language was rarely spoken in Madina, except in Nkwantanang, which has consistently maintained its distinct identity. As a result, there was no strong sense of ethnic “Ga-ness” in the community.¹⁶⁵ For instance, Dakubu noted that, particularly among the founders and the Ewe community, there was some resentment toward the notion that the land belonged to the Ga people. Despite this underlying sentiment, there was little

¹⁶¹ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019; Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religions in Ghana*, 452-454

¹⁶² Allodial rights represent the highest form of land ownership, signifying absolute and permanent ownership free from any superior claim or obligation to a higher authority, such as the state or a landlord. This concept has roots in both historical land tenure systems and modern legal frameworks. In Ghana, allodial rights are recognised under customary law and are primarily held by Stools, Skins, or Clans, who serve as custodians for their community members. In some instances, the state holds allodial title, especially for lands acquired through compulsory acquisition. While allodial titleholders exercise ultimate ownership, they often grant subsidiary rights, such as usufruct rights (enabling community members to use the land) or leasehold interests (allowing third parties temporary use through formal agreements). See for example Constitution of Ghana, *Articles 257, 266, and 267*, (1992):156,160-162

¹⁶³ Gilbert Ansre, “Madina: Three Polyglots and Some Implications for Ghana”, in edited by Sirirpi Ohannessian, Charles A. Ferguson and Edgar C. Polome, *Language Surveys in Developing Nations: Papers and Reports on Sociolinguistic Surveys*, (Arlington, Virginia: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1975), 161

¹⁶⁴ Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 8

¹⁶⁵ Ansre, “Madina: Three Polyglots and Some Implications for Ghana”.

evidence of interethnic or religious tension in daily life.¹⁶⁶ The protests against the name “Madina” in favour of the Ga name “La Hee” were motivated by a desire to foster a stronger “feeling of ethnic Ga-ness”. Proponents of the name “La Hee” envisioned it as an extension of Nkwantanang, with the quest for reinforcing a Ga cultural identity in the area.

For instance, on April 12, 1991, a cyclostyled letter was sent to the La Mantse by a La citizen residing in Nkwantanang. The letter commended the Traditional Council for the recent renaming of Labadi to La. It also referenced a rumour that the name “Madina” was to be changed to “La Hee” or “New La”. However, no official confirmation of this rumour was available until October 12, 1991, when a *Mirror* article reported the La Mantse affirming the change. In the article, the La Mantse stated that “Madina is not Ghanaian” and expressed concern about the behaviour of certain community heads in “La Hee” (or Madina), accusing them of “trying to brew trouble by arrogating to themselves the authority as landowners”.¹⁶⁷

The people of Madina strongly opposed the proposed name change to “La Hee.” Both the *People’s Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* reported on October 21, 1991, about a meeting held on October 19, during which residents of Madina unanimously rejected the name change.¹⁶⁸ Subsequently, on November 23, 1991, the *Ghanaian Times* published an article in the form of an open letter, signed by the president and secretary of the La Youth Association. The letter referred to the residents of Madina (La Hee) as tenants of La and indirectly accused them, along with others, of engaging in fraudulent land transactions.¹⁶⁹ Further opposition was reported in the maiden edition of *Madina Today* on December 20, 1991. The paper covered an event from November 26, where the heads of the Madina community, along with the residents, passed a resolution reaffirming their rejection of the proposed name change. Additionally, it was reported that the Traditional Council had proposed appointing a La chief for Madina, a suggestion that added another layer of tension to the dispute.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 9

¹⁶⁸ “Madina Elders Object to New Name”, *People’s Daily Graphic*, 21st October, 1991,3; “Madina Residents Reject Name”, *Ghanaian Times*, 21st October, 1991, 3

¹⁶⁹ Nsiah Akuetteh and Osa Bone, “Madina Residents Rejects Name- A Rejoinder”, *Ghanaian Times*, 21st November, 1991,9

¹⁷⁰ Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religions in Ghana*, 449-451; Dakubu, *The Korle Meets the Sea*, 9

The underlying concerns discussed above reveal the political dimensions of the Madina-Nkwantanang relationship, characterised by several layers of tension. A significant political element was the enduring hostility of Nkwantanang residents towards the settlers at Madina. This animosity stemmed, in part, from the La Mantse's decision to allocate land to the government for resettling displaced groups from Nima and the Trade Fair Center site. According to Ibrahim Baro, Nkwantanang residents made several attempts to obstruct the development of the new settlement. These efforts included boycotting economic interactions with the settlers, such as refusing to sell them food or engage in any business transactions. The animosity was so pronounced that the people of Nkwantanang reportedly celebrated when a windstorm destroyed the new settlers buildings during the early stages of the settlement's development.¹⁷¹

Ibrahim Baro further recounts an incident during the land allocation process when he, Alhaji Seidu Kardo, and the surveyor encountered an inhabitant of Nkwantanang lying in ambush with a gun aimed at Seidu Kardo. With the assistance of workers on the land, they managed to apprehend the assailant and brought him before the La Chief and members of his Council. Such hostile acts reinforced Alhaji Seidu Kardo's resolve to proceed with developing his new settlement independently, thereby deviating from the initial idea of integrating Madina as an extension of Nkwantanang.¹⁷²

The second factor was the internal political condition within the La State. Nii Anyetei Kwakwaranya II, under whose reign Madina first developed, was eventually destooled. Notably, Nii Anyetei hailed from a quarter of La that had only recently begun providing chiefs after joining the state.¹⁷³ The Klanaa claim on the land, which he had opposed, formed part of a broader and ongoing struggle over land control among the La Mantse, the La Traditional Council, and various La clans. This internal conflict was reflected in a series of public notices published in the *People's Daily Graphic* during 1992 and 1993, where differing claims were openly contested.¹⁷⁴ These divisions within the La State were further exacerbated by veiled criticisms and historical innuendos among opposing factions. The renaming of La itself can be interpreted as a reflection of these

¹⁷¹ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019. Similar reports appear in Quarcoo et al, *The Madina Survey*, 16.

¹⁷² Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019.

¹⁷³ Dakubu, *The Korle Meets the Sea*, 9

¹⁷⁴ Peter Ala Adejetey (solicitor for La stool), "Public Notice by the Stool on Lands at Madina and Surrounding Villages", *People's Daily Graphic*, 11th February, 1993, 11

internal divisions. The dominant stool faction may have sought to position itself as the custodian of an authentic, untainted La identity, free from colonial corruption—a direct critique of the earlier leadership, which they implied had been compromised by such influences. This renaming, therefore, was not just a cultural reclamation but also a political strategy to assert legitimacy and control.

The third layer of the political tension concerned the relationship between La and Madina. While the people of Madina acknowledge the legal status of the land as being under the jurisdiction of the La stool, they reject any other form of allegiance. Specifically, the community heads of Madina refused to accept legal responsibility to present gifts to the La stool during the annual Ga Homowo festival. This refusal symbolised a rejection of political subordination and challenged the Traditional Council's authority to appoint a chief for Madina. The *Resolution of the Madina Community Heads* firmly emphasised Madina's identity as an urban community, and this contrasted with the depiction of Madina as “one of the rural settlements of La” in a letter from the La Youth Association. This distinction was underscored in the maiden edition of *Madina Today*, whose front-page story celebrated the inauguration of the Madina Urban Council.¹⁷⁵ While the disagreement ostensibly revolved around political power—namely, the right to appoint a chief and demand tribute—it was often framed in customary and linguistic terms, which further complicated the narrative and amplified the tension between the two communities.

The series of publications regarding the name changes previously mentioned underscores the centrality of identity and heritage in the broader conflict. The *Mirror's* interview with the La Mantse and subsequent columns primarily focused on the question of names, with only indirect references to chieftaincy issues. Similarly, the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times* on October 21, 1991, highlighted the name change in their headlines. Notably, the *Daily Graphic* story, which served as an extended caption accompanying a photograph of the meeting, made no mention of chieftaincy or land-related disputes.¹⁷⁶ The La rejoinder published in the *Ghanaian Times* on November 21, however, emphasised the name issue, addressing it first before devoting most of its content to asserting La's right to appoint a chief for Madina. The La Youth Association explicitly linked the name change and the proposed installation of a La citizen as chief of “La Hee” to a

¹⁷⁵ See for example Dakubu, *The Korle Meets the Sea*, 10-11. The *Madina Today* newsletter did not survive beyond the 1960s.

¹⁷⁶ Madina Elders Object to New Name”, *People's Daily Graphic*, 21st October, 1991,3; “Madina Residents Reject Name”, *Ghanaian Times*, 21st October, 1991, 3

broadest effort to reflect the heritage of the La people, stating, “The installation of a La citizen as chief of La Hee as well as the change of name of Madina are all part of a program designed to reflect the heritage of the La people”.¹⁷⁷ It becomes evident, however, that the notion of heritage invoked by the La Youth Association does not align with the diverse and multifaceted heritage of Madina’s residents. This disconnect highlights the contested nature of cultural identity in the debate, as the imposition of a singular interpretation of heritage conflicts with the pluralistic realities of Madina’s community.

For instance, by the 1990s, Madina had developed into a dynamic urban space that reflected a complex interplay of diverse cultural identities and practices, shaped by its role as a melting pot of migrants, traders, and settlers and this period marked a significant phase in Ghana’s post-independence urbanisation, characterised by rapid population growth, migration from rural areas, and the expansion of urban centers like Madina. Unlike the relatively insular heritage narrative of the La Youth Association, which drew from the historical and cultural identity of the La people, Madina’s urbanity was defined by its cosmopolitan character, thriving marketplaces, and evolving social networks, shaped by the socio-economic transformations of the era.

At this stage, it is clear that the competing place names—“Madina” and “La Hee”—had distinct constituencies, each with its own interests and motivations. While there was no significant advocacy for retaining the name “Labadi” over “La,” there was notable resistance to replacing “Madina” with “La Hee.” The La state appeared to have framed the debate in terms it could dominate or have a significant advantage, yet the outcome was far from straightforward. Initially, “Madina” functioned as a marker that distinguished the new settlement from the established Ga village, Nkwantanang, which bore an Akan name. Ironically, “Madina” did not serve as a unifying identity for the township’s diverse inhabitants. However, when challenged by the proposed name “La Hee,” “Madina” seemingly evolved into a rallying point, uniting the community in opposition to the imposed change. For example, a report by *Madina Today* noted that the October 19 meeting, where the community collectively rejected the name change, began with a moment of silence in honour of Alhaji Seidu Kardo, a key figure in the settlement’s history.¹⁷⁸ This symbolic act underscores the historical significance of “Madina” and the deep connection its residents had with

¹⁷⁷ Nsiah Akuetteh and Osa Bone, “Madina Residents Rejects Name- A Rejoinder”, *Ghanaian Times*, 21st November, 1991, 9

¹⁷⁸ Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 10

the name. It is important to note that the debate centered exclusively on the imported foreign names of the towns—"Madina" versus "La Hee"—rather than their Ga designations. This focus underscores the linguistic and layered cultural complexities of heritage, identity, and belonging within the contest, where the imposed Ga identity clashed with the multilingual and multicultural reality of Madina.

The Politics of Integration and Resistance: Contemporary Paradoxes

The political complexities faced by the new settlers in Madina underscore a central challenge: the politics of integration. In the postcolonial era, integration into La communities had significant implications for both the newcomers and the established residents. The struggle over the naming of Madina illustrates how the process of integration was not merely about physical settlement but also about the power to shape the community's identity and history. The significance of the debates surrounding the name of Madina lies in the symbolism embedded within a settlement's name. A place name is not just a label—it is a historical transcript that reflects the origins, identity, and collective memory of a community. Naming, or renaming, a place can serve as a powerful tool for asserting a particular historical narrative and defining the community's identity. In the case of Madina, the name was not just a marker of geography, but a representation of the historical experience of its diverse inhabitants, including the Ga, Ewe, and other migrant groups.

When a settlement's name is changed or contested, especially by the host community, it often reflects an attempt to impose a particular historical or cultural perspective onto that community. The La people's insistence on renaming Madina "La Hee" was not merely about semantics but about asserting control over the historical narrative and defining the social and political boundaries of the area. For the new settlers, who identified as part of the growing multicultural fabric of the township, the name "Madina" symbolised a distinct community history, one that could not easily be overwritten or appropriated by external forces. In this sense, the ability of the community to influence the name of their settlement becomes a means of asserting their version of their historical identity. By insisting on the retention of the name "Madina," residents were not only defending their heritage but also drawing a line that excluded outside influences, particularly those that sought to impose a different historical or cultural identity on the area.

This contest over the name underscores the broader political dynamics of integration, where power is not only about land ownership or political representation but also about the right to define and control the narrative of community life. In other words, the question of integration in this

context was not just about land or governance; it was about how the settlers could preserve their distinct identity in the face of attempts by the host community to redefine them. The debate illustrates how place names are not only geographical identifiers but also powerful symbols of ownership, identity, and belonging within the broader political and cultural context of postcolonial urban spaces.

The decision to replace the names “Labadi” and “Madina” with “La” and “La Hee,” despite the explanations and justifications offered, reflects the political tensions brought about by urbanisation and demographic changes. As urbanisation accelerates in Accra, with increasing interethnic contact and higher population density, issues of identity, language, and territorial boundaries come to the forefront, within limited geographical areas. This urban growth fosters a complex environment in which different ethnic groups vie for visibility and influence, leading to linguistic and cultural competition.¹⁷⁹ For example, Dakubu observes that multilingualism remains a prominent feature in the Ga-speaking areas, but there is a growing perception that the Akan language is gradually overtaking Ga in importance, especially in Accra.¹⁸⁰ This linguistic shift is particularly significant in areas like Nkwantanang and Madina, historically Ga strongholds, where the traditional language is increasingly at risk of being overshadowed.¹⁸¹ The prominence of Akan in the city may reflect broader shifts in social and economic power, further exacerbating concerns about the preservation of the Ga language and culture.

The physical expansion of Accra into neighbouring areas such as Osu and North Labadi compounds these anxieties. The La state, which once maintained a clear territorial identity, now faces the risk of marginalisation in the face of a rapidly urbanising city. In response to this pressure, the contestation over place names becomes more than a matter of local governance; it becomes a symbolic struggle for the preservation of group identity and historical continuity.¹⁸²

Therefore, the competition between the ancient Ga name “La” and the English-language designation “Labadi” serves as a key symbol of this struggle. The choice of a name is laden with historical and cultural meaning, as indicated earlier. For the La people, reclaiming the name “La” represents a rejection of colonial legacies and a reaffirmation of their indigenous identity in a

¹⁷⁹ Personal interview with Grace Afoley Odai, former queenmother of the Old Madina Market, La Nkwantanang, 20th December, 2019; Ansre, “Madina: Three Polyglots and Some Implications for Ghana”, 161.

¹⁸⁰ Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 10-11

¹⁸¹ Personal interview with Grace Afoley Odai, La Nkwantanang, 20th December, 2019; Ansre, “Madina: Three Polyglots and Some Implications for Ghana”.

¹⁸² Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 11

rapidly changing urban landscape. The term “Labadi” was seen as a colonial imposition, one that carried associations of foreign domination and linguistic erosion. By reverting to “La”, the La community sought to assert control over its own history and identity, thus ensuring that the narrative of its past remained undiluted by external influences.

This tension between “La” and “Labadi” is more than a semantic debate; it represents the La community’s attempt to reclaim symbolic power in the face of urban expansion and the erosion of traditional boundaries. As newer residents—often from different ethnic backgrounds—contribute to the changing linguistic and cultural landscape of Accra, the La seek to retain symbols of their identity in the face of potential marginalisation. By reclaiming names like “La” and “La Hee”, they strive not only to assert their place within the city but also to safeguard their cultural legacy from being overshadowed by the dominance of other languages and groups. Thus, the mythic quality of this historical power, while tied to recent colonial history, gives it a lasting and potent significance in the struggle for cultural autonomy and recognition. Therefore, place naming in this context is a powerful tool for the La community to assert its presence in a rapidly changing urban environment.

The tension between the La State and Madina reflects a complex interplay of cultural, linguistic, and political factors. While the Akan cultural and linguistic influence is acknowledged, both historically and in the present, it is addressed subtly. The Akans are implicitly blamed for their role in colonial misnaming, yet their linguistic contributions, such as loanwords, are accepted as thoroughly naturalised. This indicates a longstanding integration of Akan influence into Ga society, making it less contentious. In contrast, the association with Hausa is viewed as more recent and external. This association positions Hausa speakers as “others” in the eyes of the Ga, regardless of their linguistic practices. The perception of Hausa’s influence as alien highlights a deeper resistance to integrating newer groups compared to older, more assimilated influences such as the Akan.¹⁸³

The tension between La and Madina is emblematic of a broader challenge: the La State’s inability to integrate new arrivals into its social and political structure based on traditional models. Historically, older migrants, such as those associated with Nkwantanang, were integrated more readily into the Ga polity. However, twentieth-century migrants—protected by colonial and post-independence governments—remain beyond the control of La host communities. These new arrivals, unlike earlier groups, have resisted assimilation, a situation exemplified by the

¹⁸³ Personal interview with Grace Afoley Odai, La Nkwantanang, 20th December, 2019

composition of the Nkwantanang Traditional Council, which excludes migrant chiefs. This exclusion underscores the limits of integration and the La political authority's reluctance to pursue it further, given the migrant's large numbers and diverse origins. Attempting to integrate such a population under traditional models would risk undermining Ga political authority. Instead, the La polity has opted to negotiate terms of exclusion, preserving the "integrity of the existing community" while limiting the migrant's political and cultural influence.¹⁸⁴

The ideological framework of a politically stratified order plays a central role here. Official visits and meetings emphasise a patron-client relationship, where the client (the migrant community) is expected to approach the patron (the La polity) on unequal terms. This reinforces the political advantage of the La, which maintains the right to direct communication and delineates the terms of inclusion or exclusion. Consequently, the migrants of Madina do not perceive themselves as dependent clients of the Ga, which disrupts the traditional patronage model.¹⁸⁵ For instance, Dakubu's observations on language reinforce this dynamic. Among northern men, the relatively low bilingualism in Ga reflects limited interaction with the Ga as patrons. In contrast, northern women, who interact more with Ga women in domestic spaces, exhibit higher levels of Ga bilingualism. This gendered linguistic dynamic underscores the uneven nature of relationships between the Ga and migrant groups, thus emphasising group-to-group negotiations over individual integration.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Personal interview with Kotei Afutu, at La Nkwantanang, 14th February, 2019; and on 17th July 2022. Afutu is a sub-chief at La Nkwantanang. He provides a nuanced explanation for the exclusion of migrant chiefs from the La Nkwantanang Traditional Council. He attributes this exclusion to efforts aimed at preventing further tensions arising from cultural and religious differences. According to Afutu, the migrant chiefs are predominantly Muslims, and the Council aims to avoid compelling them to partake in or witness traditional practices that might conflict with their faith, such as the pouring of libation and animal sacrifices to ancestral spirits and deities like Addai Kwasi and Kla. This decision highlights the complex interplay between cultural preservation and religious diversity within the community. The Council's choice to maintain these traditional practices while excluding the migrant chiefs demonstrates a prioritisation of cultural continuity over inclusive representation. Additionally, it is important to note that Ewe chiefs, another significant group in the area, have chosen to affiliate with the Zongo Traditional Council instead of aligning with the La Nkwantanang Council. This decision could reflect their preference for a platform that accommodates the diversity of practices and beliefs found within the Zongo community, which often includes a mix of Muslim and non-Muslim populations. This arrangement illustrates the broader challenges and layered complexities of navigating identity, tradition, and diversity in managing integration and coexistence in an urbanised and multiethnic settings like La Nkwantanang and Madina. While the exclusion may mitigate immediate conflicts, it also reinforces divisions, limiting opportunities for deeper intergroup integration and dialogue. It further highlights the challenges traditional governance systems face in adapting to changing demographic realities while maintaining harmony among diverse groups.

¹⁸⁵ Personal interview with Nii Kotei Jonathan, Labadi (La), 28th January, 2019. He is the family head (onupka or abusuapanin) of the Klanaa group in La.

¹⁸⁶ Dakubu, *Korle Meets the Sea*, 167

So, the La dispute with Madina can be understood as an effort to assert control over the migrants by compelling them to adopt a client relationship with the Ga state. This is distinct from an attempt to impose Ga customs or assimilate the migrants fully. Instead, the La State seeks to reinforce its authority by demanding symbolic gestures of deference, such as recognising Ga land ownership and participating in traditional practices like *Homowo*.¹⁸⁷ However, the migrant's refusal to comply highlights their assertion of autonomy and resistance to the patron-client framework. In essence, the La-Madina dispute reflects deeper struggles over identity, language, and political authority. The La State's attempts to enforce a hierarchical relationship reflect the challenges of maintaining traditional power structures in the face of urbanisation and demographic change. The migrant's resistance, in turn, reveals a shifting landscape of power and integration, where the old models of inclusion are increasingly untenable.

The tension surrounding the naming of the newly inaugurated La-Nkwantanang-Madina Municipal Assembly in 2012 reflects the ongoing struggle over territorial control and identity within the Ga community, particularly concerning the growing influence of migrants. Before the name change, the La Nkwantanang area was part of the larger Ga East District, and the initial omission of "La-Nkwantanang" from the name of the new municipality sparked feelings of exclusion among the La people. This omission was perceived by some as a sign that the La community was losing control over their traditional territories to migrants, particularly those from Madina and other surrounding areas.¹⁸⁸ For the La people, the inclusion of "La Nkwantanang" in the official designation of the municipality served as an important symbolic gesture—one that asserted their continued authority and presence in the area. It was seen as a way to reinforce their historical and cultural claim to the land, particularly in the face of urbanisation and demographic changes that have brought in diverse groups, including significant numbers of migrants. By securing the name "La Nkwantanang", the La people were able to emphasise their historical and cultural significance, thus ensuring that their legacy and influence were recognised in the official representation of the municipality.¹⁸⁹

Despite this, the administrative capital of the newly formed municipality is Madina, which further accentuates the complex dynamics at play in the area. While Madina has become the focal

¹⁸⁷ Personal interview with Nii Kotei Jonathan, Labadi (La), 28th January, 2019; personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019.

¹⁸⁸ Personal interview with Nii Kotei Jonathan, Labadi (La), 28th January, 2019.

¹⁸⁹ Personal interview with Nii Kotei Jonathan, Labadi (La), 28th January, 2019.

point for administrative functions, the naming dispute and the inclusion of “La Nkwantanang” highlight the persistent tension over cultural identity, control, and the evolving political landscape. Madina’s prominence as the municipality’s capital also underlines the evolving sociopolitical and demographic realities, where migrants and newer settlements increasingly shaped the identity and functionality of the area. This balance between administrative practicality and cultural assertion speaks to the larger challenges faced by host communities in rapidly urbanising areas, where demographic shifts often challenge established identities and power structures. It thus encapsulates the ongoing negotiation of power, space, and belonging in a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

The La-Nkwantanang-Madina Municipality has evolved into a cosmopolitan center, with diverse settler communities contributing to its dynamic cultural and social fabric. Among these communities are groups from Gonja, Dagomba, Wala, Frafra, Hausa, Akan, Ewe, Nzema, and Guan backgrounds, who have established their own organisational systems influenced by their distinct cultural heritages. This diverse demographic landscape has led to a blending of cultures, languages, and traditions, thereby creating a unique urban environment where multiple identities coexist and interact. Over time, these settler communities have become deeply embedded in the area, contributing to its rich multicultural identity and, in some cases, being perceived as almost “indigenous” due to their long-standing presence.

Despite this diversity, the La people remain the acknowledged indigenes of the area. Their cultural practices, including the celebration of the *Homowo festival*, continue to be a prominent feature of the Municipality’s cultural life.¹⁹⁰ Yet, the cosmopolitan nature of the municipality complicates this celebration. The presence of multiple ethnic groups, each with its own cultural and religious traditions, means that festivals and cultural expressions are not limited to those of the Ga people. Migrant groups such as the Ewe, Dagomba, Gonja, and Guan also celebrate their own festivals, which adds to the area’s complex cultural diversity.

This multiplicity of cultural expressions emphasises the evolving nature of identity in the municipality. While the La people continue to regard themselves as the original inhabitants, the festival celebrations and cultural practices of the migrant groups indirectly challenge the dominance of the indigenous Ga traditions. The coexistence of these multiple festivals emphasises the tension between maintaining traditional identities and adapting to the pluralistic and multicultural environment developed in the municipality. In the long run, this diversity contributes

¹⁹⁰ Ghana Statistical Service, *2010 Population and Housing Census*, 3-4.

to both the vibrancy and the complexities of community relations, as different groups navigate the terrain of cultural preservation, recognition, and political power in this rapidly urbanising space.

The Institution of Migrant Chiefs: How Migrants Govern Themselves in Madina

The leadership structure in Madina, shaped by its diverse demographic and ethnic composition, is inherently complex and layered. The various ethnic groups, including the Hausa, Dagomba, Gonja, Wala, Frafra, Chokosi, Kotokoli, Krobo, Ewe, Ga, and Akan, must navigate both traditional and modern political systems. These groups not only engage with La (Ga) political structures but also interact with contemporary administrative bodies such as the Municipal Assembly, Assemblyman, and Member of Parliament. This dual engagement underscores the intricate political realities that residents face.

At the heart of the traditional political structure in Madina lies the La Mantse, the paramount chief of the La people, who holds the allodial title to the land upon which Madina is built. According to Ga customary law, individuals from other ethnic groups—whether from within the same ethnic group but a different kinship lineage, or from entirely different groups—are considered “strangers” for land tenure purposes.¹⁹¹ This legal framework influences not only land ownership but also the distribution of political power in the community. Migrant groups, regardless of their size or historical presence, are required to show allegiance to the La people and acknowledge the La Mantse as the ultimate authority over the land.

For the migrant communities, their interactions with the La Mantse are facilitated through their designated leaders, popularly designated as migrant chiefs or headmen.¹⁹² These leaders play a crucial role in representing their communities within the broader political and social frameworks of both traditional Ga leadership and the modern political system. In this way, migrant groups retain a degree of political representation and social integration, while simultaneously navigating the hierarchical structures imposed by the indigenous La people.

This system reflects a form of political subordination in which the migrant groups—despite their long-standing presence and significant cultural contributions—are still required to acknowledge the supremacy of the La Mantse in the political hierarchy. It also illustrates the tension between maintaining traditional forms of authority and accommodating the diverse, often

¹⁹¹ PRAAD/ACCRA/ADM 5/4/122, “Gold Coast Land Tenure, Vol II”; personal interview with Nii Kotei Jonathan, La, 28th January, 2019.

¹⁹² Ione Acquah, for instance, indicates that in 1954, there were twenty-three ethnic headmen in Accra who had been presented as Divisional Chiefs and later recognised by the Senior Government Agent. See for example *Accra Survey*, (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1972), 101-102.

competing, interests of the various ethnic groups in Madina. The interaction between these traditional systems and modern governance mechanisms further complicates the leadership dynamics, as residents seek to assert their rights and influence within both spheres of power.

The institution of migrant chiefs in Accra, including Madina, has a historical and cultural legacy that dates back to the colonial era, where such leaders were known as “tribal headmen”. These leaders were primarily established to represent the interests of migrant communities in urban settings to ensure the welfare of their members, particularly in the context of ethnic diversity and political structures that often sidelined or marginalised newcomers.¹⁹³ Migrant chiefs serve as key representatives for their respective ethnic groups, fulfilling roles similar to those of traditional chiefs in their hometowns, despite not having stools or formal political authority tied to specific lands in Accra.¹⁹⁴ Unlike hereditary chiefs, migrant chiefs are chosen based on criteria such as their relationship with the deceased chief, their personal qualities such as generosity, respectability, wealth, age and leadership ability, and their standing within the migrant community. While the position is not hereditary, it is a significant form of social and political leadership within these communities that reflects the importance of cultural preservation, dispute resolution, and community organisation.

In the absence of land-based authority like their indigenous counterparts, migrant chiefs gain legitimacy through the support of their ethnic communities. They act as mediators in conflicts, preside over cultural festivals, and preserve customs that help maintain ethnic identity in a diverse urban environment. Their authority is informal, rooted in the collective recognition and respect of their communities rather than legal or land-based power. This contrasts with traditional chiefs in southern Ghana, where stools represent both spiritual and political authority, which links the chief to the land and its people.¹⁹⁵

When a migrant chief passes away, the succession process is based on consensus within the community. The successor is elected by the members of the migrant group and must be approved

¹⁹³ See for example Acquah *Accra Survey*, 101-102.

¹⁹⁴ On the relationship between stools and land in southern Ghana, see discussions in, for instance, Janine M. Ubink and Kojo S. Amanor (eds.), *Contesting Land and Custom in Ghana: State, Chief and the Citizen*, (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2008); Janine M. Ubink, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts, and the Role of the State in Peri-Urban Ghana*, (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2008); Sara Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics Of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); and Gareth Austin: *Labour, Land And Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807–1956*, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

¹⁹⁵ PRAAD/ Accra/ADM 11/1/1448, “Death of Chief Alhaji Braimah”; PRAAD/ Accra/ADM 11/1/1446, “Mohammedan Community in Accra, 1926”; PRAAD/ Accra/ADM 11/1/1502. “Hausa Community, Accra”.

by the local Ga (La) divisional chief, who then presents the new leader to government officials for formal recognition. This process ensures that the migrant chief has legitimacy within both the local traditional and modern political systems. This process illustrates how the migrant chiefs balance their ethnic leadership with the need for recognition and cooperation with traditional and government authorities in Accra.¹⁹⁶

The system of migrant chiefs in Madina highlights the complex relationship between indigenous Ga authority and migrant communities. While these chiefs do not wield political power in the same way as traditional Ga chiefs, they maintain an essential role in managing ethnic relations, facilitate governance within their communities, and foster a sense of belonging and continuity for migrant groups in the urban environment. This structure reflects a broader effort to balance traditional customs and modern governance in increasingly cosmopolitan spaces like Madina.

The history of chieftaincy in Madina Zongo was marked by a mix of evolution of leadership, inter-ethnic collaboration, and conflicts that reflected the area's demographic diversity and social dynamics. The initial leadership under Alhaji Seidu Kardo established a structure that continues to influence the governance of migrant communities in Madina. Installed as chief in 1964, Alhaji Seidu Kardo's leadership was instrumental in organising the growing migrant population and maintaining a semblance of order in a rapidly urbanising area.

Following Alhaji Seidu Kardo's death in 1977, tensions over succession brought to light the ethnic complexities within the Zongo community. These disputes were rooted in both familial claims, such as Alhaji Baba Seidu's (son of the former chief) nomination, and broader ethnic rivalries, particularly among the Dagomba and other northern Ghanaian groups. The protracted conflict, which culminated in the closure of the Madina Central Mosque in 2002, demonstrates how chieftaincy disputes can destabilise community institutions. The resolution, achieved through a collaborative effort led by the Office of the Vice President, Alhaji Aliu Mahama, and other key figures, underscores the importance of mediation in such multi-ethnic contexts.¹⁹⁷ The dispute also resulted in a restructuring of leadership. Each ethnic group, especially those from northern

¹⁹⁶ PRAAD/Accra/ADM 11/1/1446, "Mohammedan Community in Accra, 1926"; Acquah, *Accra Survey*, 101

¹⁹⁷ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Nima, 25th August, 2019; Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religions in Ghana*, 452-453. The other personalities involved in the mediation process included the Greater Accra Regional Minister- Ibrahim Cudjoe (I.C.) Quaye, the Inspector General of Police- Patrick Kwarteng Acheampong, and the National Chief Imam- Sheikh Usmanu Nuhu Sharabutu.

Ghana, began electing its chief while remaining under the overarching authority of the *Sarkin Zongo* (chief of the Zongo). This structure created the Zongo Council of Chiefs, a unified body representing the collective interests of the migrant communities in Madina.

The Zongo Council of Chiefs includes a range of ethnic leaders from the Gonja, Dagomba, Wala, Frafra, Hausa, and other northern groups. Interestingly, it also includes the Ewe chief, who observes traditional rituals, distinguishing him from the predominantly Muslim chiefs. This inclusion highlights an openness to cultural diversity but also raises questions about the Council's religious coherence, especially since the deputy regent of Nkwantanang cited religious differences as the reason for excluding migrant chiefs from the La Traditional Council.¹⁹⁸ This inconsistency may reflect pragmatic considerations over strict adherence to religious or cultural homogeneity.

Smaller ethnic groups in Madina that lack sufficient populations to elect a chief often align themselves with a neighbouring ethnic group with larger numbers. Interestingly, Akan residents in Madina do not have migrant chiefs, likely due to their proximity to their hometowns, which enables them to have direct access to their traditional chiefs. Additionally, the historical predominance of Akan populations in southern Ghana may reduce the need for migrant representation in urban areas like Madina.¹⁹⁹

By creating a leadership system where each ethnic group is represented yet unified under a single *Sarkin Zongo*, Madina Zongo has developed a governance model that accommodates diversity while encouraging collaboration. However, the challenges of balancing religious and cultural differences, as well as the inherent tensions between migrants and indigenous Ga leadership, continue to shape the evolution of chieftaincy in the area.

La (Ga) Indigenous Religion and Religious Diversity in Madina

Madina's complex religious and cultural landscape reflects both its historical roots and its dynamic evolving urban reality. The spiritual importance of the land, especially in Nkwantanang, is tied deeply to La traditional beliefs, where land is not simply a commodity but viewed as sacred, embodied in the concept of "Mother Earth". This religious understanding of the land was historically linked to agricultural practices, where farming was not just an economic activity but a spiritual one that intertwined with the worship of deities and mediated by traditional priests.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Personal interview with Kotei Afutu, at La Nkwantanang, 17 July, 2022

¹⁹⁹ See instance Acquah, *Accra Survey*, 103-104

²⁰⁰ PRAAD/ACCRA/RG 15/1/48, "In the Matter of Land at Nkwantanang Required for the Service of the Gold Coast Colony"; Car C. Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, 155; PRAAD/ACCRA/RG 15/1/2161, "Land

The religious dimension in Madina, especially as it relates to land, can be traced back to its roots in the La and broader Ga spiritual practices. The La people, centered in Labadi, are known to venerate multiple deities, with Lakpa and Oshila being prominent figures. Lakpa, as the chief deity of La, is not only central to the La polity but also has widespread influence across the Ga territory.²⁰¹ Oshila, the deity associated with agriculture, was particularly significant in Nkwantanang, where the priest (*wulomo*) had crucial roles both in farming rituals and as a mediator in land-related matters. The connection between farming, religion, and the land is evident in the role of the Oshila priest, whose duties included performing rituals to ensure agricultural prosperity, such as preparing *kpokpoi* (a traditional Ga dish) for the Homowo festival and making sacrifices to appease the spirits during times of crisis, like droughts or locust invasions.²⁰² The Oshila priest's role in mediating land transactions further underscores how religious authority was intertwined with the practical management of the land.

However, as Madina has expanded and urbanised, the traditional agricultural functions of the Oshila priest have diminished. With the scarcity of farming land, Nkwantanang's religious authority has also shifted, and the Oshila priest's role has become less relevant in day-to-day agricultural practices. Despite these changes, the La people still maintain religious authority in Madina, particularly through the Homowo festival, which continues to be a central cultural event for the La and the broader Ga community. The Homowo festival, which involves purification rituals, remains a significant religious practice in Madina, performed especially at the marketplaces, places of economic activity, and even in the growing urban spaces.²⁰³ The festival's

Acquired for the Service of the Colony Situated at Mile Post Nine (9) on the Accra-Dodowa Road for Presbyterian Secondary School, Vol. 1, 1965".

²⁰¹ See references to the deity in for instance Diana Gladys Azu, *Ga Family and Social Change*, (Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1974), 11-14; Margaret J. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, (New York: AMS Press, 1979), 6 and 40; John Parker, *Making of the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 21; and Ray A. Kea, *A Cultural and Social History of Ghana from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century*, (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), 94-59, 98-100, 123, 178, 277. See also Abraham Akrong, "Pre-Monarchical Political Leadership among the Gas with Special Reference to the People of La", *Research Review*, supplementary 17, (2006): 137-147

²⁰² *Homowo* is an annual festival that is celebrated by the Ga in remembrance of their painful experience with hunger and they eventually conquered. The festival is a historical re-enactment of the scarcity of food in the initial abode of the Ga as a result of heavy drought or locusts invasion in their region. The effect of this climate and environmental conditions led to terrible effects such as man-stealing, and rise in panyarring which was mostly felt by Ga women. During this period the indigenous Ga relied on the spiritual mediation of the traditional priest to remedy the situation because the belief was that such calamities occurred because the deities may have been offended. Homowo therefore, is celebrated to mark the defeat of hunger by the Ga people. Homowo is thus translated to mean "a hooting at hunger", or shaming of hunger. See Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, 276-279.

²⁰³ Personal interview with Grace Afoley Odai, 20th December, La Nkwantanang, 2019; personal interview with Nii Kotei Jonathan, Labadi, 28th January, 2019.

rituals, performed during the night, emphasise the spiritual importance of Madina's public spaces, and those who engage in the marketplace activities, regardless of their religious affiliation, are indirectly involved in these rites. This reflects a continued religious influence over Madina, where traditional Ga customs are maintained alongside the growing Christian and Islamic communities.²⁰⁴

Madina's religious plurality complicates this landscape, with Christianity and Islam both having significant followings and, at times, showing influences from the Ga traditional religious practices. Christianity and Islam in Madina are shaped in ways that interact with Ga traditional religious beliefs, especially through shared practices and, at times, through the accommodation of indigenous elements. These encounters illustrate how religion in Madina cannot be understood in isolation; instead, the dynamics of these faiths are influenced by the religious history and practices of the La people and other ethnic groups.

The continued presence of traditional Ga practices, especially the Homowo festival and related rituals, highlights the resilience of indigenous religious beliefs in an urbanising society. However, this coexistence with Christianity and Islam also points to a growing tension between modernity and tradition, particularly with the imposition of European legal systems and the commercialisation of land. These external forces challenge the sacredness of the land and the religious practices tied to it. As Madina grows, these tensions between religious and cultural preservation and the forces of urbanisation and globalisation continue to shape the community's spiritual identity. Thus, the religious dimensions of Madina's development are a crucial part of understanding the social, cultural, and political dynamics in this multi-ethnic and multi-religious urban space.

Christianity in La Nkwantanang-Madina: A Story of Conflicts and Cooperation

The historical dynamics between indigenous religious practices and Christianity in Madina, particularly in areas like Nkwantanang, draw attention to the complex process of religious change and conflict during the colonial and early post-colonial periods. M.J. Field's observation of Labadi (and by extension Madina) as a "stronghold of fetishism" illustrates the initial resistance that Christianity faced from indigenous religious practitioners. This resistance was particularly evident

²⁰⁴ See for example Fosu-Ankrah, "Kla: A Tutelary Deity at the Jamaica Marketplace in Madina, Accra", 488-491

in the opposition to the Basel Mission, whose efforts to establish a mission station in Nkwantanang were met with significant hostility from devotees of local deities.

The Basel Mission's move to Nkwantanang after being displaced from Osu due to the bombardment of Christianborg in 1854 was a significant development in the spread of Christianity in the area. However, their mission encountered substantial opposition from adherents of the indigenous Ga religious practices, particularly those who followed the Lakpa and Oshila deities. The initial friction between the two religious systems is reflected in the violent incidents where community members opposed the church's presence, even going so far as to destroy church property, such as the altar.²⁰⁵ The Oshila *wulomo*, who had religious authority in Nkwantanang, acted as a mediator for the community in land transactions, but his role also highlighted the tension between the church and the traditional religious leadership.²⁰⁶ The hostile environment eventually led to the Basel Mission's relocation of the church building materials to Abokobi, a nearby outstation of the church. These incidents underline the challenges the church faced in Nkwantanang. These acts were not just symbolic but represented the spiritual and cultural resistance to the intrusion of Christianity into the heart of traditional beliefs. The situation became more strained when the Basel Missionaries responded with curses, thereby escalating tensions between the religious communities.²⁰⁷

These setbacks notwithstanding, the Presbyterian Church eventually established a presence in Madina, with contributions from key individuals such as Mr. Afutu Kotei and the children of Kotei Amli.²⁰⁸ This early conflict set the stage for understanding the religious plurality in Madina, where Christianity had to coexist with indigenous religious beliefs and practices, sometimes under duress. The struggles between Christianity and indigenous religious practices in Nkwantanang reflected a broader pattern of religious competition and resistance that played out across many parts of the Gold Coast/Ghana. As Christian missions struggled to establish their presence in a religiously plural environment, acts of violence and cultural friction were not uncommon. The

²⁰⁵ Personal interview with Afutu Kotei, La Nkwantanang, 14th February, 2019

²⁰⁶ PRAAD/ACCRA/RG 15/1/48, "In the Matter of Land at Nkwantanang Required for the Service of the Gold Coast Colony". See also Parker, *Making the Town*, 160-161, 170.

²⁰⁷ Personal interview with Afutu Kotei, La Nkwantanang, 14th February, 2019.

²⁰⁸ Kotei Amli is credited as the founder of the La Nkwantanang community.

persistent opposition from local deities and their followers points to the strength of indigenous religious authority in these areas.²⁰⁹

Despite the early challenges, Christianity began to take root in Madina, especially after the establishment of various Christian denominations in the area. The Methodist Church was established in 1959, and the Presbyterian and Catholic churches followed in 1962 and 1963. The establishment of these churches coincided with the arrival of settlers in the area, many of whom came from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Over the years, the Christian community in Madina expanded rapidly, particularly with the influx of Pentecostal, Independent, and Charismatic churches from 1964 to 1992. This period saw an explosion of these churches, especially in the Zongos (migrant communities), leading to their dominance over Protestant and Catholic churches in the area today.²¹⁰

Presently, the religious demographics of the La-Nkwantanang Madina Municipality have undergone notable changes between the 2010 and 2021 censuses. In 2010, the population was 111,926, with 79.2% identifying as Christian, predominantly within the Pentecostal/Charismatic (38.7%) and Protestant (23.0%) denominations. The Muslim population was 17.5%, while Traditionalists and others comprised 1%.²¹¹ By 2021, the population had grown to 244,676, with Christianity still the dominant religion at 73.8%. However, there was a decline in its proportion, largely due to the increasing Pentecostal/Charismatic segment, which rose from 38.7% in 2010 to 51.7% in 2021. The Protestant population increased in numbers but remained stable in percentage at 25.2%. Catholics slightly decreased from 9.2% to 8.9%, while the Other Christian group declined from 16.0% to 14.2%. The Muslim population, while growing in absolute numbers from 19,602 to 32,781, saw a decrease in its proportion from 17.5% to 13.4%. Smaller religious groups, including Traditionalists (down to 0.2%), No Religion (up to 2.0%), and Other Religions (steady at 0.8%), remained marginal.²¹² These shifts suggest a diversification in religious identities, with a marked rise in Pentecostalism, a growing Muslim presence, and an increase in secular or non-

²⁰⁹ See for instance, John Parker, *In My Time of Dying: A History of Death and the Dead in West Africa*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 159-161 and 179; Pernille Ipsen, *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 102

²¹⁰ Margaret Peil and K. A. Opoku, “The Development and Practice of Religion in an Accra Suburb”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 24, 3, (1994): 201-203.

²¹¹ GSS, *2010 Population and Housing Census District Analytical Report*, 30-31

²¹² GSS, *Ghana Housing and Population Census, General Report, Volume 3A-Populations of Regions and Districts*, 44, 88, and 102; <https://statsbank.statsghana.gov.gh:443/sq/7d5ff3b9-f10a-4eac-bf1b-d168b9cda22b>; https://statsbank.statsghana.gov.gh/pxweb/en/PHC%202021%20StatsBank/PHC%202021%20StatsBank_Population/religion_table.px/. Accessed on 23rd October, 2024.

religious affiliations, reflecting broader cultural and demographic changes within the municipality.²¹³

The rise of charismatic churches in Madina reflects broader shifts in the religious landscape, with Pentecostalism becoming a significant force in the religious and cultural fabric of the community. This shift also influences religious coexistence, as these churches sometimes challenge traditional notions of religious authority, both in relation to the older Protestant churches and the indigenous religious practices still present in the community. The religious plurality in Madina, with its Christian, Islamic, and indigenous religious communities, presents both challenges and opportunities for religious coexistence. The tension between Christianity and indigenous religions, especially in the early years of settlement, has evolved into a more complex relationship. In recent years, the dominance of charismatic Christianity in the Zongos has reshaped the religious landscape, with implications for how different faiths interact and coexist in the community, particularly with regard to religious soundscapes and other forms of ritual performances.

Islam and the Muslim Community in Madina

The presence and growth of Islam in Madina are closely intertwined with the history of the community's development, migration patterns, and the broader religious landscape of Accra. While historical records are silent on the specific arrival of Islam in Nkwantanang before 1959, the broader context of Islam in Accra provides significant insights into the role of Muslim communities in the area. Islam has a long history in other parts of Accra, such as Labadi, where it was practised for centuries, and the introduction of Islam into Madina can be understood as part of the broader migration and settlement patterns of Hausa and other northern Muslim groups into Accra during the 19th and 20th centuries.²¹⁴

Islam was introduced to Madina through the migration of the first inhabitants, northern Muslim settlers, particularly from areas like the Northern Regions of Ghana, as well as

²¹³ The demographic changes discussed apply to the context of Madina West; however, the figures presented represent the entire LaNMMA. As noted earlier, obtaining data specific to the study location proved difficult.

²¹⁴ Histories of the development of Islam and the activities of Muslims in Accra has been well documented by researchers such as James P. Drekte, "The Muslim Community in Accra: An Historical Survey", (Legon: M.A. Thesis, University of Ghana, 1968); John Parker, "Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra, 1860s-1920", (London: PhD Dissertation, SOAS, 1995), 231-271; Osman Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims and Religion in Ghana*, Vol. 1, (Accra: Denzine Focus, 2009), 337-378, 411-420; and Samuel A. Ntewusu, "One Hundred Years of Muslim Community in Accra: A Historical Study of Tudu from 1900 to 2000", in edited by Pade Badru, Brigid M. Sackey, *Islam in Africa South of the Sahara: Essays in Gender Relations and Political Reform*, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), 67-96

neighbouring countries such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Mali. These settlers, primarily from Hausa, Dagombas, Mamprusis, and other northern ethnic groups, brought with them their Islamic faith and traditions. While Christianity had a visible presence in the area from the establishment of churches in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Islam gradually grew alongside it.

The first mosque in Madina, known as the Zongo Masalachi Zuma (Zongo Mosque), was established in 1963, around the same time as the founding of Protestant and Catholic churches in the area.²¹⁵ This marks the beginning of organised Islamic worship in Madina, which expanded as more Muslim families settled in the community, predominantly in areas now referred to as Madina Zongo. Since then, various Islamic sects have emerged and taken root in the area, including the Ahlu Sunna, Tijaniyya, Ahmadiyya, Shia, and Salafi groups. Each sect has its own mosque and Imam (religious leader), with the Chief Imam of Madina Zongo serving as the head of the Muslim community in the area.²¹⁶

Madina's religious demographic has evolved to include a significant Muslim population, particularly in the Zongo communities, where the majority of residents identify as Muslim. Some areas of Madina, especially those closer to Madina Zongo and other migrant communities, have a predominantly Muslim population. The Zongo area is a bustling part of Madina, and it is a place where Muslims, mostly from northern Ghana and other West African countries, have formed a tight-knit community. The establishment of multiple mosques—one for each sect—has allowed these communities to maintain their religious practices and preserve their identity. In addition to the central mosques, private or family mosques are common in Madina. Many Muslim households have small prayer spaces within their homes, where daily prayers and other religious practices are observed. The presence of Islamic schools (known as *madrassas*) is also notable in the area, further emphasising the religious and educational growth of Islam in the community.

The Muslim presence is not only limited to Zongo neighbourhoods. In several parts of Madina, particularly in more densely populated neighbourhoods, Muslims represent a majority or significant portion of the population. This demographic shift is reflected in the growing number of

²¹⁵ Peil and Opoku, "The Development and Practice of Religion in an Accra Suburb", 201.

²¹⁶ Personal interviews with Ibrahim Larry Mohammed, Madina, 3rd March, 2018; and with Suleman Alhassan, Madina, 25th October, 2019. Alhassan is a practising Tijaniyya Muslim was brought from Nigeria to Madina in the late 1990s. He was about 5 years old when he arrived in Madina, and is presently a graduate of the University of Ghana. Larry, whom I already discussed in the introductory chapter is devout Tijaniyya Muslim who grew up in Nima and relocated to Madina in the early 2000s to join his family, and to also attend the University of Ghana for his undergraduate studies.

Islamic institutions such as schools, and community centers, and the increasing influence of Muslim leadership within the broader governance structure of Madina. The diversity within Islam in Madina is a defining feature of the religious landscape. Although many Muslims in the area do not explicitly identify with a specific sect and prefer to be recognised simply as Muslims, the presence of the Ahlu Sunna, Tijaniyya, Ahmadiyya, Shia, and Salafi groups adds layers of complexity to the religious and social dynamics in the community. The differences between these sects can sometimes lead to tensions, but in many cases, the shared sense of religious identity as Muslims supersedes sectarian differences. These divisions are particularly significant in the context of religious rituals and leadership, but also in social spaces such as marketplaces and community gatherings where individuals from different sects often interact.

The relationship between Muslims (especially those from the North) and other religious communities, particularly Christian communities, in Madina is shaped by both religious and ethnic factors. Muslims, particularly those from the Northern Regions of Ghana, are often viewed through the lens of both religion and ethnicity, as they are primarily associated with northern Ghanaian cultures and practices. For many Christians and adherents of traditional religions in Madina, there is a complex relationship with Muslims. Historically, there has been a perception of Islam and northerners as being somewhat “alien” or distinct from the dominant southern Ghanaian Christian cultures. This perception is rooted in ethno-religious differences, with Muslims often viewed as outsiders, particularly by those who do not share their religious practices. These sentiments have sometimes led to tensions between different religious groups, particularly in the earlier phases of Madina’s urbanisation.²¹⁷

However, over time, the interactions between these communities have led to greater mutual understanding and coexistence. While some ethnic and religious tensions persist, the shared experiences of living in the urban space of Madina, with its religious diversity and multi-ethnic population, have led to greater tolerance and acceptance. In recent years, religious coexistence in Madina has become more pronounced, with the development of interfaith dialogue initiatives, joint community projects, and a more inclusive approach to public celebrations like festivals and public holidays.²¹⁸ The presence of Muslims in Madina, especially those from the north, has contributed

²¹⁷ Personal interview with Ibrahim Baro, Madina, 8th August, 2018. He is a bus station master in Madina. He is the son of the first personal secretary to Alhaji Seidu Kardo.

²¹⁸ Personal interview with Sheikh Ibrahim Yunus, Madina Zongo, 18th March, 2020. He is the Chief Imam of the biggest Central Mosque in the Zongo.

to the diversity of religious practices in the area, with Islam being an important religious force that coexists alongside Christianity and indigenous beliefs. The challenges faced by Muslims and Christians in Madina are not so much about outright hostility, but rather about negotiating space in a religiously plural environment.

Islamic Youth and Female Leadership in the Muslim Community in Madina

The younger generation of Muslims in Madina is increasingly embracing diverse global Islamic movements and ideologies, a shift driven by exposure to social media, international scholarships, and participation in Islamic conferences. This globalisation of Islamic thought has empowered youth groups to organise activities such as public lectures, *dawah* campaigns, and charity drives, which serve both spiritual and social purposes. These initiatives address challenges faced by young Muslims in a multicultural and urbanising context, such as identity formation, community cohesion, and intergenerational tensions. As Madina continues to grow as a hub of Islamic learning and practice, these youth-led efforts play a pivotal role in ensuring the vibrancy and adaptability of the Islamic community.²¹⁹

Youth leadership among the Muslims has become increasingly significant in Madina as they seek to shape the spiritual, social, and political dynamics of the community. Young people are taking active roles within mosques, community organisations, and educational institutions, and creating spaces to address the unique challenges faced by their generation. Many Islamic youth organisations also emphasise education and economic empowerment, which aim at providing the tools necessary for success in a fast-changing urban society. Through initiatives such as organising Quranic competitions, hosting online Islamic study sessions, and running interfaith dialogues, youth leaders ensure that Islamic values are preserved while fostering inclusivity. These efforts help to combat radical influences, reinforce the principles of peaceful coexistence, and provide constructive outlets for youthful energy. The influence of global Islamic thought has also led to the adoption of contemporary Islamic discourses, particularly around issues like social justice, climate change, and mental health. These align the Islamic faith with pressing global concerns.²²⁰

Women in Madina have historically played a crucial role in the socio-religious organization of the Islamic community, and their leadership continues to evolve in response to modern challenges. One prominent figure is the *magazia*, a leader among Muslim women who holds a

²¹⁹ Personal interview with Mannan Abdul Sameed, Madina, 5th September, 2019. He is a student at the University of Ghana, and also doubles as the Headteacher for an Islamic institution called Iqra Educational Centre.

²²⁰ Personal interview with Yusuf Adams, Madina, 31st March, 2019. He is a lecturer at the Islamic University College.

position of great respect and responsibility. Historically, the *magazia* was integral to the communal welfare of Zongo communities, organising women's participation in communal labour and overseeing events like weddings, naming ceremonies, and funerals. Today, the role of the *magazia* has expanded to include advocating for women's education, entrepreneurship, and active participation in religious and social life. The *magazia* acts as a bridge between Islamic traditions and the demands of modern society, mentoring younger women and promoting unity within the community. In addition to the Magazia, other women leaders are stepping into roles as teachers in madrasas, where they focus on Quranic recitation (*tajweed*), Arabic literacy, and Islamic studies.

Women-led prayer groups and *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) gatherings are another vital aspect of female leadership, offering spiritual enrichment and strengthening communal bonds. These gatherings serve as platforms for discussing religious matters, addressing social issues, and providing support networks for women. During religious festivals such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, women play key roles in coordinating communal meals and ensuring women's voices are part of the celebrations.

The efforts of youth leaders and female leaders, such as the *magazia*, demonstrate the resilience and adaptability of Madina's Islamic community. They ensure that while Islamic traditions are preserved, the community also engages with modern societal challenges. This dual approach helps Madina maintain its Islamic identity as the community navigates the complexities of urbanisation, multiculturalism, and global influences. The collaboration between different segments of the community—youth, women, and senior leadership—seeks to create cohesion and promote a strong Islamic presence in Madina.

Conclusion: Madina-An Evolving Urban and Diversifying Community

The history of Madina, from its establishment in 1959 to its present status as a thriving urban center, reveals a dynamic interplay of migration, religious plurality, and socio-economic transformation. It reflects broader socio-religious, economic, and political shifts in Ghana over the past century. Initially founded to address the resettlement needs of displaced communities following the construction of the Kotoka International Airport (KIA), the Accra-Tema Motorway, and the La Trade Fair Center, Madina has grown into a multicultural and multi-religious suburb of Accra that continues to attract people from diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Its establishment was not merely a physical relocation of people but a process of constructing a

shared community identity, rooted in the coexistence of various groups and their collective aspirations.

The contestation over Madina's naming underscores the profound connection between place, identity, and power. By resisting the host community's attempts to impose a name, the residents asserted their right to self-definition, laying the foundation for a pluralistic identity. This act of resistance reflects the broader dynamics that have shaped Madina's emergence as an effervescent and diverse community, where different cultures coexist despite underlying tensions. It is a testament to the resilience and agency of its people in forging a shared space amid competing narratives of belonging.

Historically, the religious landscape of Madina reflects broader trends in Ghanaian urbanisation and cultural integration. Christianity, Islam, and La traditional religion formed the foundational pillars of the community's spiritual life. Among the original La settlers, Christianity and traditional practices were integral components of their cultural identity. Islam gained prominence with the establishment of a Zongo community, introduced by migrants such as Alhaji Seidu Kardo and others from northern Ghana and neighbouring countries. This religious coexistence reflects similar dynamics across Accra, where migration and urban expansion have fostered a complex interplay of faiths. In Madina, as in other urban centers, religious diversity has served as both a unifying force and a source of occasional tensions. Cooperation between religious groups had often manifests in interfaith engagements, shared community activities, and the collective pursuit of development, while tensions arise from intra-religious doctrinal and interethnic differences, and competition over space and influence.

The arrival of Islam in Madina, while absent from Nkwantanang's early documented history, gained prominence with the establishment of Zongo settlements and the first mosque in 1963. Like Christianity, Islam integrated into Madina's religiously pluralistic landscape and shaped its identity as a community of coexistence and interaction amidst occasional tensions. The presence of diverse Islamic groups—ranging from Ahlu Sunna to Ahmadiyya—enriched Madina's religious fabric, fostering an environment of both collaboration and sectarian distinction. Additionally, the development of mosques and the active involvement of youth in *dawah* campaigns, public lectures, and charity initiatives positioned Madina's as a significant center for Islamic learning and practice in urban Ghana. These dynamics emphasise the adaptability of Islam within a complex and evolving religious and social environment.

Over the decades, Madina's religious landscape has been profoundly shaped by both global and local forces, and this reflects the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity. The proliferation of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, alongside the growing influence of global Islamic movements, underscores the adaptability and responsiveness of religious communities to broader societal changes. These developments align with broader trends of religious modernisation and the transnational exchange of religious ideas, practices, and resources, which have come to define the urban religious experience in Ghana. Madina thus serves as a reflection of these transformations, illustrating how local religious practices are continuously reshaped within a globalised context. As the community evolves, these global forces contribute to the ongoing transformation of religious identities, practices, and interfaith relationships, thus showing how local and global religious trends intersect and reshape the community's spiritual landscape.

Today, Madina stands as a microcosm of Ghana's religious pluralism and urban transformation. Its history reflects the resilience of Indigenous traditions, the adaptability of Christianity and Islam, and the complex negotiations required for coexistence in a diverse urban setting. Madina's evolution from a traditional Ga farming village to a bustling urban suburb mirrors the broader narrative of Ghana's postcolonial history, where tradition and modernity, and the local and the global, continue to intersect in profound and transformative ways. This chapter, therefore, lays the foundation for exploring the ongoing dynamics of religious encounter and coexistence in Madina, as its inhabitants navigate the challenges and opportunities of urban life, religious plurality and coexistence in the 21st century.