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One Conflict, Three Resolution Mechanisms: The Dilemma of Resolving the Inter-Ethnic Conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja of Northern Ghana

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Abstract:

In the 1990s, Northern Ghana grappled with ethnic conflicts of different magnitude. Many of these conflicts were 'colonial conflicts' as their causes are rooted in colonial policies, but few others had no reference to colonialism; they were occasioned by local exigencies. The Nawuri-Gonja conflict was one of the 'colonial conflicts', which ravaged the Kpandai area in 1991 and 1992. During and after the armed encounters between the Nawuri and the Gonja, various attempts were made to resolve the conflict. Traditional authorities, the Government, local and international NGOs jumped into the 'conflict resolution wagon' and took turns in three successive attempts to resolve the conflict. The conflict seemed intractable and an albatross as attempts to resolve it did not yield the results desired. This paper delineates the attempts made to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict between 1991 and 1996, and argues that resolving the conflict was a dilemma and unsuccessful.

Keywords: *Bimbilla Na, Committee, Conflict, Gonja, Kpandai, Nawuri, peace, resolution, mediation.*

1. Introduction

In the early pre-colonial period, Kpandai and its environs in Northern Ghana were inhabited by the Nawuri (the autochthones) and the Gonja (the immigrants). The Nawuri claim autochthony and trace their origins to Afram plains and Larteh Akuapem in Southern Ghana. The Gonja, on the other hand, claimed descent from Ndewura Jakpa and his invading founders of the Gonja kingdom and traced their origins to Mande in present-day Mali. Narratives on Nawuri-Gonja encounters in the pre-colonial period suggest that the Gonja peacefully entered into the Kpandai area in the seventeenth Century as immigrants; they did not arrive as invaders as was characteristic of Gonja penetration into most parts of Northern Ghana. The narratives further suggest that prior to Gonja arrival the Kpandai area was long inhabited by the Nawuri. The narratives further suggest that the Gonja neither conquered the Nawuri nor did the two groups fight each other in the pre-colonial period. The two ethnic groups co-existed as political allies (Awedoba 2009: 169; Mbowura 2002: 26-29). In its report, the Ampiah Committee explained that the Nawuri:

were an indigenous people in Alfai [Kpandai] area who had complete autonomy and lived in friendly association with the Krachis and Nchumurus ... Nowhere in the evidence had it been stated that the Nawuris were at any time conquered by the Gonjas. The evidence holds that the Nawuris and the Gonjas were allies and fought together during the Asante invasion of the Area ... the ... ethnic groups existed as a loose association since they met in the now Eastern Gonja Area for common purposes; fighting the common enemies like Asantes and others and protecting their lands (Ampiah 1991: part I, 61-62).

Initially, Nawuri-Gonja relations were cordial. Overtime, the relations between the two ethnic groups turned sour as the colonial enterprise interfered in the political structure in the area and invested political authority in the Gonja in contravention of history, customs and tradition. The creation of Gonja authority over the Nawuri as a colonial agency gave a new face to Nawuri-Gonja encounters. In the pre-colonial period, the notions of the boundaries of political authority and allodial land rights in most parts of Northern Ghana were intertwined. Applying this notion to their colonially created political authority, the Gonja began to claim and exercise allodial land rights in the Kpandai area. The attendant consequence of the Gonja posture was the emergence of conflicting claims to allodial land rights in the Kpandai area between them and the Nawuri. Both ethnic groups used history as 'weapons' to advance their claims.

In the Kpandai area, as is the case of other Ghanaian societies, the modes of measuring allodial land rights are embedded in the historical traditions of the people. By right of autochthony and autonomy, allodial land rights in the Kpandai area in the pre-colonial period resided in the Nawuri. However, the area's encounters with the colonial enterprise led to the evolution of new constructs of allodial rights in land, which challenged established traditions and provided the opportunity for the immigrant Gonja community to appropriate land. In 1913 the Germans issued a warrant to Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, the Gonja head chief in the Kpandai area then, making him the overlord of the area for the sake of political expediency (Brammah & Goody 1967: 70; Dixon 1955: 8). This began Gonja rule over the Nawuri, which was made irreversible when the British colonial authorities subsumed the Nawuri into the Gonja kingdom in 1932 following the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories

(Annual Report on British Togoland 1932: 6-7). This led to a series of encounters between the autochthonous Nawuri and their Gonja overlords over allodial rights in land, which expressed itself in social, political and economic debate in the colonial and post-colonial times. Eventually, an armed conflict broke out between the two ethnic groups in 1991.

The war that ensued passed through three phases during which the pendulum oscillated between the warring factions. The Gonja drove the Nawuri out of the Kpandai area in the first phase (April 1991), but the Nawuri returned and drove the Gonja out in the second phase (June 1991). Gonja attempt to re-occupy Kpandai and its environs in the third phase of the conflict in May 1992 was unsuccessful and led to many casualties (Linde & Naylor 1998: 35; *The Mirror*, 6 June, 1991: 7) Between 1991 and 1996, traditional authorities, the Government and NGOs made three successive attempts to resolve the conflict, but the 'resolution packages' appeared unsatisfactory to the warring factions for a repertoire of reasons. The result is that resolving the conflict continues to be a dilemma and appears to be unachievable.

2. Methodology

The study gives primacy to interpretation and analysis, which discussed the dilemma of resolving the Nawuri-Gonja conflict within historical and contextual analysis of conflict. The research method of the study is qualitative. It generated analyzable, interpretative and descriptive data in the specific context of the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. The data for the study was collected over a four-year period (2008-2012) through archival research and field work, mainly interviews and focus group discussions in the Kpandai area. The bulk of archival materials consulted consisted of letters, memoranda, petitions and other official correspondences which gave clues of the nature of the mechanisms adopted to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. The report of the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry of 1991, known officially as *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuro Dispute*, which investigated the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict was also utilized. Interviews were held with Gonja and Nawuri informants in the Salaga and Kpandai areas, and data were obtained from oral narratives about the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Largely, interview contexts were random, natural and target-based. Data from interviews were edited, scrutinized and compared to ascertain veracity, dichotomies, consistencies and inconsistencies. Focus group discussions were also held in Kpandai in 2011 with opinion leaders of different ethnic, intellectual and social stratifications to obtain insights and oral narratives of the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Use was also made of data from existing literature. Literature consulted consisted of those that discussed issues within the contextual perspective of conflicts and conflict resolution. This study therefore utilized data from a variety of sources, the contents of which were carefully scrutinized, compared, evaluated and synthesized.

3. Conflict and Conflict Resolution Issues in Theoretical Context

Studies of the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict must necessarily address the issue of conflict and conflict resolution in theoretical perspective. Until the end of the Cold War, conflicts in Africa were seen as un-extinguished bushfires from the Cold War. Wars and conflicts in African history during the Cold War were generally seen by many scholars as a monopolized phenomenon by the Super Powers. This proposition was anchored on the view that every conflict in Africa was in way shaped by the ideological struggle between the East and the West, and that the chief protagonists – the United States and the Soviet Union – fought wars by proxy in Africa (Richards 2005: 1-25). There was also the contention that the "Super-Power balance of nuclear terror kept the lid on many local conflicts, but once the Cold War competition ended, "endemic hostilities reasserted themselves, which saw the upsurge of ethnic conflicts in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s as a reaction to events in Eastern Europe. The collapse of the old order in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s thus had a tremendous impact on the fragile nation-states of Africa.

Scholarship has also linked conflicts in Africa to colonialism. The argument is that prior to colonization, Africans belonged simultaneously to a bewildering variety of social networks – nuclear and extended families, lineages, age sets, secret societies, village communities, diasporas, chiefdoms, states and empires. Loyalties and identities were complex, flexible and relatively amorphous, and certainly did not add up to clearly demarcated tribes living in well-defined and bounded territories. These multiple identities ... continued into the colonial period (Lentz & Nugent 2000: 5).

The overwhelming argument by Africanist historians is that the invention of ethnic groups or tribes was a product of colonial policy, though they acknowledge the fact that ethnicity in Africa was "nourished by the active participation of African actors who moulded political and cultural traditions in accordance with their own self-interest" (Lentz & Nugent 2000: 5). This argument stresses the disparate nature of African societies as the sources of conflicts on the continent. The view is that conflicts in Africa are an intrinsic phenomenon of the multi-ethnic nature of African states which necessarily leads to clash of identities and cultures. Ethnic pluralism in Africa creates conflict structures and creates conditions for the mobilization of ethnic and cultural resources for violent conflict (Richards 2005: 1-25).

At the end of World War II, international players crafted the UN Charter aimed at preventing the eruption of violent conflicts in future. A Great War of the magnitude of World War II did not erupt after the formulation of the UN Charter, but various degrees of wars, including genocides, erupted in Africa in the 1990s. International and local actors' attention has been focused on dealing with conflicts in Africa. Conflict management and prevention are carried out by many actors (domestic and external) in the international arena to deal with conflict issues in Africa. The United Nations Organization, African Union, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), individual states or groups of states, Religious Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the use or deployment of security forces for peace-enforcement purposes. In the 1990s alone, "the United Nations Security Council has sent nine peacekeeping missions to Africa" (Zartman 2000: 2). The continent itself has also played a prominent role in organizing peacekeeping forces to forestall conflicts in many parts of Africa (Zartman 2000: 2).

The issues in the contextual analysis of conflict resolution are problematic. Lederach (1997: 38ff.) suggested that the attempt at conflict resolution must necessarily bring on board actors which he described as “middle-range leaders” of the respective communities, populations or ethnic groups. These “middle-range leaders” included local leaders, grassroots leaders, political and religious leaders as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Lederach’s suggestion is in line with current discourses on conflict prevention and resolution which emphasize the use of non-state actors to prevent, de-escalate and resolve conflicts in weak countries, including Africa. Other scholars have emphasized the role of cross-cultural factors in the formulation of conflict resolution mechanisms. They stress the fact that conflict resolution mechanisms must necessarily reflect and should be formulated within different cultural contexts. In the *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Medicine* edited by Zartman (2000), he emphasized the use of traditional conflict resolution actors to resolve conflicts in Africa. He argued that:

traditional societies in Africa and elsewhere are reputed to hold secrets of peacemaking locked in their ways, formed from centuries of customs before the disruption of colonialism.” In places and practices that modernization has passed by, these traditions are often claimed to be still in use, keeping the heart of society in harmony while imported overlays such as states and currencies are collapsing in conflict around them (Zartman 2000: 1)

Making references to the rising tide of conflicts in Africa despite the repertoire of Western-oriented conflict resolution mechanisms utilized to resolve them, Zartman (2000: 4) argues that “the persistence of violent conflict in Africa indicates that modern international methods are also defective in facing the challenge.” In the view of Zartman (2000: 4), the foreignness and the non-African nature of the conflict resolution mechanisms as well as the failure to tap the wisdom of traditional African conflict management practices accounted for the failure of the application of western-oriented methods to the resolution of conflicts in Africa. Zartman therefore advocated the use of African traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve conflicts on the continent.

The dynamics of the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict reflected theoretical issues in conflict resolution discourses. Through the mediation attempts of the Bimbilla Na (paramount chief of the Nanum Traditional Area), the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict utilized traditional conflict resolution resources as Zartman advocated. Western-oriented conflict resolution mechanisms, as evidenced by the work of the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry, were also applied to the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Equally, the combined attempts of the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT), NGO-Consortium and Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) from 1994 to 1996 to resolve the conflict reflected Lederach’s suggestion for the utilization of middle-range leaders to broker and resolve conflicts.

4.1. The Bimbilla Na’s Mediation of June 1991

In the attempt to resolve the seething Nawuri-Gonja conflict, the Northern Regional Security Committee (REGSEC) met representatives of the Nawuri and the Gonja at Tamale on May 7, 1991, to obtain first-hand information about the causes of the conflict and to outline the arrangements for its resolution (Ampiah 1991: part I, 35). The meeting identified the Bimbilla Na as the traditional authority with the capacity to resolve the conflict. Beyond the fact that Bimbilla Na, Na Attah Abarika, was at the time the President of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs and could use his position to resolve the conflict (Gonja Memorandum 1994: Appendix III, 3), his insight into the historical issues of the conflict was also not in doubt. As the overlord of Nanum which shared a common boundary with the Kpandai area, the Bimbilla Na was naturally quite privy to the historical issues of the conflict than any of the traditional leaders in the Northern Region of Ghana. Quixotically, it was imperative to utilize the traditional machinery of the Bimbilla Na to attempt a resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, even if it was perfunctory and anecdotal. The PNDC District Secretaries for East Gonja and Bimbilla, the Deputy Northern Regional Administrative Officer and the Registrar of the Northern Region House of Chiefs facilitated the mediation and assisted the Bimbilla Na (Minutes of Meeting of REGSEC 1991: 11).

On 7 June 1991, the Bimbilla Na met the representatives of the Nawuri and the Gonja at his palace in Bimbilla in the attempt to resolve the conflict. The Bimbilla Na’s mediation employed persuasive strategies to resolve the conflict since it was not a finding-finding body to ‘exhume’ the historical antecedents of the conflict aimed at finding lasting solutions. It focused largely on ceasefire, disarmament and peaceful co-existence of the warring factions as re-requisites for the resolution of the conflict (Ampiah 1991: Exh. C, 8; Memorandum of DISEC 1991: 4). In principle, the warring factions agreed to live in peace. The Gonja also agreed in principle to send back their warriors from other parts of the Northern Region and to allow the Nawuri, who had been chased out of the Kpandai area, to return to their villages (Gonja Memorandum 1994: 4). These terms of agreement were, however, made contingent on certain conditions, mainly the resolution of the dispute over allodial land rights in the Kpandai area. The commitment to agree to a ceasefire, disarmament and peaceful co-existence was verbal; the warring factions did not commit themselves to a written pact. Neither was the Bimbilla Na able to persuade the warring factions to sign a ceasefire pact (Ampiah 1991: part II, 106-107).

The Bimbilla Na’s attempt to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict represented the first systematic attempt to resolving the conflict. At least, it sought to transform the relationship of the Nawuri and the Gonja from an armed conflict to a peaceful one. However, the Bimbilla Na’s “resolution package” was unconvincing and lacked the “lethal force”. The failure of the Bimbilla Na to arrange for follow-up meetings with the warring factions was catastrophic. He met the warring factions once on June 7, 1991, and for unknown reasons, no further efforts were made to dialogue with them (Ampiah 1991. Exh. C, 8). Naturally, the Bimbilla Na’s failure to continue to dialogue with the factions made it difficult for him to succeed in his attempt at resolving the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

It would appear that apparent security lapses in Kpandai and the exigencies at the time impeded the practical implementations of the agreements reached in principle. The practical implementation of the factions’ agreement to a ceasefire and peaceful co-existence depended on the strength and tact of the security agencies in the Kpandai area. Unfortunately, two unprofessional

actions by the security agencies sapped off the progress towards a ceasefire, disarmament and peaceful co-existence of the Nawuri and the Gonja. The first consisted of a series of persistent attacks at night by unidentified individuals against the Gonja in Kpandai (DISEC Memorandum to the Ampiah Committee 1991: 4). As the security could not deal with the medley of the attacks, the Gonja naturally could not entrust their safety in the hands of the security personnel in the Kpandai area. Blaming the attacks on the Nawuri, Gonja interpreted them as 'Nawuri insurgency' and a breach of trust. Hence they refused to engage in further mediations, and turned their attention from disarmament to mobilization of military resources to defend themselves and fight the Nawuri (DISEC Memorandum to the Ampiah Committee 1991: 4). The Police in Kpandai also found it difficult to disarm the Gonja as part of the mediation process to guarantee a peaceful return of the Nawuri. The attempt of the police to disarm the Gonja seemed to have made matters worse as a strayed bullet from one of their men's rifle accidentally killed a Gonja warrior (DISEC Memorandum to the Ampiah Committee 1991: 4). Enraged by the unintended action of the police, the Gonja refused to submit themselves to the disarming scheme. Eventually, the scheme was aborted, and the Bimbilla Na's attempt to resolve the conflict was jeopardized.

The Bimbilla Na's attempt to resolve the conflict was hampered by the uncompromising positions of the Gonja and the Nawuri. They both made demands as conditions for the disarmament and resolution of the conflict. The Gonja, for instance, expressed misgivings about the possibility of living together and refused to enter into a ceasefire agreement or a peace treaty if their demands for allodial land rights in the Kpandai area were not met (Speech by Alhaji Ademu Issaka 1991: 2). They also made some demands as a *quid pro quo* for a peace treaty. Among others, they demanded a resettlement scheme for the Nawuri, payment of war indemnities and labour services from the Nawuri, but the Nawuri refused to accept them (Speech by Alhaji Jawula Musah, June 7, 1991). The demands of the Nawuri which were contained in a memorandum earlier submitted to REGSEC on 7 May 1991 demanded, among others, the recognition of their allodial rights to land in Kpandai and its environs, recognition of their chiefs and mandate in bodies and institutions in the area (Nawuri Memorandum, May 7, 1991).

4.2. The Ampiah Committee of Inquiry, 1991

As the Bimbilla Na's efforts could not resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, the factions intensified fighting in order to gain control over the Kpandai area. The intensification of the conflict therefore required the mobilization of effective and elaborate resources to resolve it. Consequently, the Government established the "Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuros Dispute", to investigate the conflict and proffer recommendations for its resolution. The Committee, which was informally known as the "Ampiah Committee", was a four-member body set up by the Government of Ghana in October 1991 to investigate the causes of the conflict between the Gonja and the Nawuri on the one hand, and the Gonja and the Nanjuro (Nchumuru) on the other. It was established by an Executive Instrument (E.I.) 23 known as "Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuros Dispute Instrument, 1991." Its terms of reference were:

(a) to investigate the circumstances that led to the Communal Violence at Kpandai on 7th April and 12th June 1991 and find out the extent of loss and damage resulting from the incidents; (b) to determine the nature of the tenure system in the Kpandai area and to define the right of the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuros in the allocation and utilization of land; (c) To determine the nature and practice of traditional allegiance of the Nawuris and Nanjuros to the Gonjas and to determine whether any inequities or anomalies exist in the system (d) To investigate any other matters that is in the opinion of the committee incidental there to; and (e) To submit its findings and recommendations to the provisional National Defence Council within three months (E.I. 23; Ampiah 1991: part I, 1).

The Committee was inaugurated in October 1991 in Tamale at the premises of the Northern Region House of Chiefs. The Committee, which had the powers of a High Court, was headed by Justice Ampiah, a High Court Judge. Over a month-and-a-half period, spanning from 21 October 1991 to 4 December the same year, the Committee investigated the cases of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. It identified the dispute over allodial land rights, traditional political arrangements and other social exigencies in the Kpandai area which had colonial and post-colonial underpinnings as the causes of the conflict (Ampiah 1991: part I, 14-33). The Committee's report contained a repertoire of recommendations for the resolution of the conflict. Among others, the recommendations included vesting allodial land rights in the Kpandai area in the Nawuri and the elevation of the head chief of the Nawuri to a paramount status. The report was signed on 31 January 1992 and submitted to the military Government of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) for attention. However, internal political exigencies in Ghana at the time, occasioned by the drift of the country towards multi-party elections slated for December 1992, put brakes on the implementation of the Committee's report. Unsure of the repercussions of the implementation of the Committee's report on the electoral fortunes of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), a political party formed by the PNDC Government to contest the presidential and parliamentary elections in 1992, the Government found it politically expedient to shelve the Committee's report. In short, the lack of political will on the part of the PNDC Government thwarted the progress to the resolution of the conflict. Subsequent Governments of Ghana have equally adopted an adamant attitude towards the implementation of the Committee's recommendations. It is pathetic that that about twenty-six years after the Committee submitted its report, no concrete attempts were made to implement its recommendations.

The lack of political will of successive Governments of Ghana since 1992 to implement the Committee's recommendations did not tinge its significance as far as efforts at resolving the Nawuri-Gonja conflict are concerned. The Committee constructed a coherent first-hand account of the causes and course of the conflict for public consumption. It gleaned evidence from various sources and made sixteen public sittings in Tamale in which it took evidence from twenty (20) witness – three (3) from the Gonja, three (3) from the Nawuri, two (2) from the Nchumuru and twelve (12) from independent witnesses (Ampiah 1991: part I, 2). It also took memoranda from witnesses and the parties, thoroughly examined official records and gleaned evidence from reports and archival documents (Ampiah 1991: part I, 2 and 3). Its report provided a coherent analysis of the causes of the conflict and the

various pathways of Nawuri-Gonja encounters over allodial land rights and overlordship in the colonial and post-colonial times. The result was that the Committee's report was presented in a way that could be readily understood by persons who had no first-hand knowledge of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict (Ampiah 1991: part I, 5).

Furthermore, the Committee established the roadmap for the resolution of the conflict. To this end, it made thirty-one findings (Ampiah 1991: part I, 67-72). The findings conferred autochthonous and allodial land rights in the Kpandai area to the Nawuri. It also established that the Nawuri since the ancient times were politically autonomous until the colonial enterprise super-imposed the Gonja over them (1991: part I, 67-68, 71). By its findings and recommendations, the Committee provided pathways for the resolution of the conflict. Among others, it recommended Government recognition of Nawuri allodial land rights in Kpandai and its environs, the creation of a separate Traditional Council for the Nawuri, the gazetting of Nawuri chiefs, the elevation of the Nawuriwura to paramount status, the creation of a separate District Assembly for the Nawuri and Nchumuru areas, and the improvement of the health and police facilities in Kpandai and its environs (Ampiah 1991: part I, 74-77). Thus, the Committee's commendations, which outlined concrete measures for the resolution of the conflict was the first of the kind. Besides, it represented the first bold attempt to resolve the fundamental issue of the conflict – the dispute over allodial land rights in the Kpandai area.

4.3. The Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT), NGO Consortium and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI)

In 1994 inter-ethnic conflicts broke out in the Northern Region of Ghana. While the conflicts were raging, some NGOs working on aid and reconstruction in Northern Ghana formed the Inter-NGO Consortium, an organization whose members included Action Aid, Catholic Relief Services, the Red Cross, Save the Children, Catholic Secretariat, the Christian Council of Ghana, Christian Aid, World Vision, Oxfam GB, Action on Disability and Development, and Lifeline Denmark (Bogner 2009: 81; Linde & Naylor 1998: 48-49). Others were Amaschina, Assemblies of God Development Relief Services, Council of Churches and related organizations, Gubkatimali, Penorudas, and Ti Yum Taaba Development Association (Linde & Naylor 1998: 48). The NGO Consortium made some attempts at reconciliation and peace process aimed at ending "violence in the short term and to promote sustainable peace in the long term through changing perceptions, attitudes and building new relationships amongst societies in the region" (Linde & Naylor 1998: 54).

Meanwhile, the Government also established the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT) to resolve all inter-ethnic conflicts in Northern Region. The PPNT toured the areas of conflict in the region and organised reconciliatory meetings with representatives of the various ethnic groups in Tamale, Accra and Kumasi. Lacking financial support and facilitation skills, the PPNT extended its invitations to the NGO Consortium and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI), a Kenyan NGO specialized in conflict mediation and peacebuilding (Linde & Naylor 1998: 53; Bogner 2009: 81). The NGO Consortium, NPI and PPNT collaboration established six workshops and negotiation meetings with the warring factions in Kumasi. The Gonja delegation in the negotiation processes included Tuluwe-Wura Kurabaso Chief G.S.S. Bakari, Dusai-Wura Kibasibi A.I. Harunah and Duwa-Wura-Kelli Sakara. The Nawuri delegation was made up of Nana J.K. Mbimadong Obimpeh I, Nana F.K. Atorsah II and Nana Kasekor I (Kumasi Accord 1996: 7-8).

In line with Lederach's suggestion, the mediation bodies brought the "middle-range leaders" to the mediation table. The category of "middle-range leaders" invited included chiefs, opinion leaders, Members of Parliament, functionaries of youth associations, and other opinion leaders of the warring factions. The task before the representatives was to discuss the problems of reconstruction and development (Bogner 2009: 83). More importantly, the representatives discussed the problems of 'conflict transformation' and peace in Northern Ghana. After six mediation meetings at Kumasi with the warring factions, opinion leaders and Government Agents, the mediation bodies brokered a peace treaty with the warring factions on 28 March 1996. All the warring factions, with the exception of the Nawuri and the Gonja signed the peace accord, an accord which is famously referred to as the Kumasi Peace Accord. The Nawuri and the Gonja, recognized that there were "several outstanding issues of dispute between them that require peaceful resolution" (Kumasi Accord 1996: 8), but the mediation bodies found it difficult to broker a peace pact between them. It would appear that the peace package of the mediation bodies appeared unattractive to the Nawuri and the Gonja. Instead of focusing on the question of allodial land rights which was fundamental to the conflict, the mediation bodies tackled a peripheral issue – the conferment of paramountcy on the head chief of the Nawuri. Obviously, the failure of the mediation bodies to resolve the dispute over allodial land rights in the Kpandai area made their peace package unimpressive and unsatisfactory to the Nawuri and the Gonja.

5. Peace-building through Resettlement and Re-integration

In 1992 REGSEC rolled out a resettlement scheme of the Gonja in Kpandai as part of the peace-building process. On 5 September 1992, the Gonja were escorted by an armed Security Task Force to Kpandai. The Gonja returnees were accommodated in the New Nkanchina Primary School as Gonja houses in Kpandai were destroyed in the wake of the conflict in 1991 and 1992. The scheme was short-lived. After a couple of weeks, the Gonja were re-evacuated to Salaga. Nawuri version imputed the failure of the resettlement scheme to the lack of bedding facilities in the Primary School and the failure to integrate the Gonja returnees into the society. Beyond these reasons, the Gonja impute the failure of the resettlement scheme to lack of socialization, lack of freedom, poor cuisine and fear of insecurity arising out of alleged armed Nawuri warriors sneaking into the Primary School in the attempt to kill them (the Gonja).

No further attempts were made to resettle the Gonja in Kpandai until 1999. In the 1996 Kumasi Peace Accord, the Nawuri and the Gonja groups agreed to continue to dialogue "until they arrive at solutions to their differences" (Addendum 1 to the Kumasi Accord 1999: 1). Consequently, the delegates of the two ethnic groups met in Tamale on 28-29 October 1999 for negotiation (Addendum 1 to the Kumasi Accord 1999: 1). Among others, the two ethnic groups agreed to:

work together for the return of displaced people from Kpandai due to the conflict. They have agreed to create a ten-person committee composed of the two delegations as well as NORYDA and supporting NGOs which will be charged with the responsibility of assessing the modalities on how the return and resettlement can be effected in an expeditious and safe manner (Addendum 1 to the Kumasi Accord 1999: 1).

For unknown reasons, the planned resettlement scheme was not implemented. Perhaps, the conflict would have been resolved naturally if attempts at resettling the displaced Gonja in the Kpandai area were successful. This would have ensured an integration of the Gonja into the society in the Kpandai area and brought social pressure on the Gonja minority to accept the 'historical truths' in relation to allodial land rights in the area. Unfortunately, the post-conflict transformation efforts to return and resettle the Gonja in Kpandai and its environs were unsuccessful. The result was that for more than two decades after the conflict, Gonja return and resettlement *en masse* in the Kpandai area could not be achieved. Individual Gonja families, however, made occasional but brief visits to the Kpandai area for personal reasons.

It is also likely that the absence of the Gonja in the Kpandai area provides a 'natural panacea' to the resolution of the conflict. It provides the Nawuri the opportunity to exercise allodial land rights in the area, a phenomenon which would probably gradually melt off the hitherto conflicting claims to allodial land rights between them and the Gonja. Whatever is the interpretation applied to the absence of the Gonja in the Kpandai area in relation to allodial land rights, it is important to note that the flight of the Gonja from the area has ensured relative peace and absence of violence between the two ethnic groups in the area for over two decades.

6. Lessons

The dilemma of resolving the Nawuri-Gonja conflict was part and parcel of the conundrum surrounding the resolution of inter-ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana in general, but many lessons can be distilled from it for the 'consumption' of state and non-state actors engaged in conflict resolution and peace-building in Northern Ghana. One key issue that emerged from the study is the problem of mobilizing the resolution mechanisms to tackle the fundamental issue of the conflict. With the exception of the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry, the mediation bodies failed to tackle the dispute over allodial land rights, which was fundamental to the conflict. For conflict resolution actors to resolve the nagging conflicts that continue to ravage Northern Ghana, it is imperative that they seek to resolve the fundamental and underlying issues. Government attitude to peace-building process in Northern Ghana is also a nagging issue. The roadmap designed by the Ampiah Committee to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict was thwarted by the lack of political will on the parts of the Government of Ghana to implement its recommendations. Governments must have a strong political will to implement the recommendations of committees of inquiries that they task to investigate conflicts. The study further reveals that the intractableness of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict is partly blamed on the warring factions as their uncompromising postures made it difficult for the resolution actors to reach an amicable settlement. Warring factions must be encouraged to soften their positions in order to open the door for mutual dialogue. The use of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and resources to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict was half-hearted. To ensure peace-building in Northern Ghana, state and non-state actors must appropriately and adequately harness the repertoire of traditional conflict resolution resources and structures for the resolution of conflicts.

7. Conclusion

Attempts through dialogue, enquiry and mediation to resolve the differences between the Nawuri and the Gonja during and after the communal violence were unsatisfactory. Resolving the conflict through the medium of chieftaincy institution under the auspices of the Bimbilla Na could not reconcile the warring factions. Neither could it the fundamental issue underlying the conflict, the dispute over allodial land rights in the Kpandai area between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The inquiry of the Ampiah Committee into the Nawuri-Gonja conflict provided pathways for the resolution of the conflict. But the lack of political will on the part of the PNDC government and subsequent Governments of Ghana since 1992 threw overboard the Committee's roadmap for the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Between 1994 and 1996, the combined effort of the PPNT, NGO Consortium and the Nairobi Peace Initiative made concerted and systematic attempts to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana, including the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Anchoring the resolution mechanism on workshops and dialogue, the mediation bodies succeeded in resolving all the inter-ethnic conflicts in the region with the exception of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. The failure of the mediation bodies to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict was due largely to their failure to resolve the fundamental issue of the conflict – the dispute over allodial land rights in the Kpandai area. A resettlement scheme for the Gonja to re-integrate them into the society in the Kpandai area to facilitate peace-building and provide a 'natural panacea' to the resolution of the conflict was also unsuccessful. The result is that the resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict continues to be a conundrum and remains elusive. Nevertheless, the various attempts at the resolution of the conflict provide useful lessons to state and non-state actors engaged in conflict resolution and peace-building in Northern Ghana.

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