

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Party Politics and Traditional Authority in Ghana: The Case of the Bono Kyempim Chiefs Association

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### Abstract:

*This paper examines the basis for the Bono Kyempim chiefs' alliance with the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP) of Ghana in the 1950s. It also evaluates the effects of the alliance on the Bono Kyempim states. The Bono Kyempim states allegedly suffered indignities as members of the Asante Confederacy in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. When the Asante chiefs openly supported the National Liberation Movement (NLM), a Kumasi-based political movement in 1954, the Bono Kyempim chiefs agitated for secession from Asante. To attract electoral votes from the Bono area in the multi-party national elections in the mid-1950s, Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president and his Convention Peoples Party (CPP), openly supported the Bono Kyempim chiefs and in fulfilment of his promise to the Bono chiefs, created the Brong-Ahafo Region in 1959. The Bono chiefs' alliance with the CPP affected villages and towns, the traditional Bono states' relations with their Asante neighbours, the chieftaincy institution and ordinary citizens. Using information gathered from interviews with informants and qualitative analysis of archival and secondary sources, the paper contends that the politicization of chieftaincy among the Bono Kyempim of Ghana had some positive effects but deep and lasting negative implications on chieftaincy in the Bono Kyempim states during and after the 1950s.*

### 1. Historiographical Background

Among the traditional institutions extensively studied in Ghana is chieftaincy, largely because it is ancient and has also managed to survive colonial and post-independence manipulations. However, the relations between traditional institutions and non-African institutions are among the most intriguing and complicated areas of contemporary studies on Africa. Paul Nugent has noted that, 'ordinary Ghanaians take Chieftaincy very seriously', and that 'chieftaincy is seldom far from the center of the frame' and that, 'chiefs, chieftaincy wrangles and the behavior of royal families have been under constant examination by researchers in the Social Sciences and the Arts.'<sup>1</sup> These studies have either analyzed chieftaincy as an institution or discussed the relations between chiefs within and between ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> Busia, has discussed comprehensively the functions of chiefs and sanctions that are applied to chiefs. He has described the processes that cases go through before they are finalized at the chief's court. He concerned himself with some of the customs and usages relating to chieftaincy in ancient Asante and concluded that the many years of colonial manipulations helped to weaken the authority of chiefs.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in her book; *The Quills of the Porcupine, Asante nationalism in an emergent Ghana*, Jean Allman discussed in detail the factors causing the formation of the National Liberation Movement (NLM), and the Asante royals' support for that political movement in the 1950s. The author discussed in detail the consequences of national politics on Asante chiefs but only discussed their Bono Kyempim neighbours in a few lines.

John Dunn and A. F. Robertson's book *Dependence and Opportunity, Political change in Ahafo* is a very useful book in studies of chieftaincy in Ghana. Apart from the detailed study of chiefs' roles in the development of Ahafo, the book discusses the problems that the placement of Ahafo in the Brong-Ahafo region instead of the Asante Region has created for the chieftaincy institution. The book is a detailed study of the conflict of tradition and modernity in Ahafo including conflict over land, allegiance and state administration. An important area of study in the book is Ahafo's place in the party-political contest between the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) and the National Liberation Movement (NLM) in the mid-1950s. With respect to party politics in Ahafo, Dunn and Robertson assert that although chiefs tried to avoid partisan politics, this was impossible considering the complex traditional states' histories, colonial rule and the advantages chiefs derived from their association with politicians.

J. B. Danquah, Reindorf, Rattray and Meyerowitz have extensively discussed the oath of allegiance, confinement of the newly-elected chief to 'educate' him to rule justly and the advice to chiefs to refrain from all forms of misconduct. In confinement, chiefs are also advised not to disregard the rights of their citizens nor to quarrel with subjects. The results of the chief's misconduct are destoolment

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Akosua Adoma Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Accra: Sub-Saharan, 2004); Nana James Kwaku Brukum, "The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Under British Colonial Rule, 1897-1956: A study in Political Change" (PhD diss., Department of History, University of Toronto, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Qtd. in Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Busia, *The Position*

or forced abdication. Awedoba and Odotei (ed) (2006) have discussed the importance of the chieftaincy institution. Articles in this publication suggest that the chieftaincy institution is still relevant despite the entrenchment of democratic rule in Ghana. This is particularly so amongst the centralized and hierarchically organized ethnic groups such as the Asante, Bono, Akyem and Ga of southern Ghana; and Gonja, Mamprusi, Dagomba and the Wala of northern Ghana. Until recent times, chiefs controlled land, minerals, water and trees of economic value. The authors assert that in Ghana, the desire for chiefship has therefore increased amongst both the rural and the educated urban population.

Writing about chieftaincy in Ghana, David Apter, asserted that despite the colonial policies on chieftaincy, the institution did not suffer outright extinction because of its functional significance. Apter's book makes a significant contribution to studies in chieftaincy in Ghana. The study helps us to appreciate the resilience of the chief's office and the chieftaincy institution as a whole. Arhin (1985), says that Nkrumah and his political party subverted chieftaincy and made chiefs passive agents of governance. He writes that chiefs regarded Nkrumah as usurper of power from the British and so lent him their support by sending congratulatory telegrams to him and the Party on every possible occasion. Chiefs also made adulatory speeches in the President's presence which most observers regarded as acts of subservience. He asserts that in towns and villages, CPP leaders controlled public announcements, whilst Town Development Committees and Youth Associations were dominated by CPP members. He says that the only traditional role left for chiefs during the Nkrumah regime was the religious one of pouring libation in the stool rooms, whilst chieftaincy was thrown into disarray to the extent that festivals of the various traditional areas became unrecognized, or ceased to be organized.

Arhin's *Traditional Rule in Ghana: Past and Present*, is a study of the chieftaincy institution among the Akan generally but he emphasized that more data existed on the Akan and other people which would require further research for a better understanding of traditional rule in Ghana.<sup>4</sup> His work helps to provide an in-depth understanding of traditional rule in pre-colonial Ghana and contributes immensely to studies in Akan chieftaincy.<sup>5</sup> Among the recently published books on chieftaincy is Richard Rathbone's *Nkrumah and the Chiefs, the politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana 1951-60*, considered an important study about Nkrumah and the chieftaincy institution. This book was the result of extensive research on how the government of the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP), under Kwame Nkrumah, sought to undermine the position of chiefs. He observes that Nkrumah successfully appointed government officials to replace chiefs. The book also discusses the protracted campaigns undertaken by some chiefs in Southern Ghana to resist their political marginalization. For Rathbone, this eventually weakened the position of the chief, altered its legal basis and made it easy for it to be incorporated and controlled. The impact of the Nkrumah regime on chieftaincy was therefore negative and long-lasting as the institution was consciously and systematically reconstructed with significantly effects on the country.

Addo-Fening, Rattray and Ernest Obeng, studied the Akyem and Asante and emphasized mainly, the practice of chieftaincy among the Akan of Ghana.<sup>6</sup> J. E. Casely-Hayford's "Gold Coast Native Institutions" was written for political reasons and was concerned with how to practice chieftaincy in the period of British rule. Boaten advises in his "*The Institution of chieftaincy in Ghana, An overview.*" that although chieftaincy had lost its relevance, the institution should be maintained because the reasons for its existence far outweigh those against it.<sup>7</sup> The "relevant aspects" of chieftaincy comprised the National and the Regional Houses of Chiefs, and the Traditional Councils, whilst the latter were some traditional areas selected from the Asante, Volta and Northern Regions. He identifies some weaknesses in the chieftaincy institution in Ghana and condemned corruption in chieftaincy, asserting that it encourages people with questionable royal links to be enstooled as chiefs in some traditional areas in Ghana.<sup>8</sup>

George Agyekum's publication of chieftaincy matters in Bono and Ahafo attempts to trace the origins of the Asante – Bono-Ahafo chieftaincy disputes and to discuss reasons for the persistence of the dispute in the Twenty-First Century.<sup>9</sup> In particular, he discusses the origin of chieftaincy disputes in the Takyiman state and some Ahafo towns. He describes people in the Bono area as an important ethnic group who had also practiced chieftaincy for many centuries. He reproduces the detail oral histories of some traditional states as narrated by witnesses at the Justice Coussey's Commission of Enquiry in the 1970s and laments the practice whereby chiefs portrayed their states as the earliest and the most important.<sup>10</sup> This, he believes had contributed to the complex and prolonged chieftaincy disputes in the Bono-Ahafo areas of Ghana.

In his book, *Chiefs and Politicians: The politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, Ladouceur discusses the problems chieftaincy faced in the Northern Region of Ghana between 1945 and 1972. Politicians managed to divide the ranks of the northern chiefs between support for the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), the Northern Peoples Party (NPP) and the Muslims Alliance Party (MAP) which invariably thwarted all efforts by politicians and chiefs for unity among northern region chiefs. The book discusses the cases of disagreements and violent arguments between the CPP and the NPP in the Northern Territorial Council (NTC). In his estimation, the politicization of the chieftaincy institution in northern Ghana caused the split of several District Councils, during the multi-party

<sup>4</sup>This indicates that data on other traditional societies among the Akan, especially those considered as 'minor ethnic groups was scarce or sometimes unavailable.

<sup>5</sup>Kwame Arhin, *Traditional Rule in Ghana-Past and Present* (Accra: Sedco Publishing 1985).

<sup>6</sup>J. E. Casely-Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London: Frank Cass, 1970).

<sup>7</sup>B. Abayie Boaten, *The Institution of Chieftaincy in Ghana: An overview* (Accra: Institute of African Studies, 1988).

<sup>8</sup>Rathbone

<sup>9</sup>George Agyekum, *Asante and Brong Ahafo Regions' Chieftaincy Affairs "Underlying causes diagnosed"* (Accra: Thomson Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup>Agyekum's primary concern was to publish narrations and testimonies by chiefs before Commissions of Enquiry. He says very little about transformations in the chieftaincy institution in Bono.

democratic elections in Ghana in 1954 and 1956. For him, the numerous chieftaincy conflicts in Northern Ghana caused disunity and the dichotomy that reflects in various aspects of Northern participation in national affairs after 1954.

These studies contribute significantly to our knowledge of chieftaincy among the Akan of Ghana. The current study adds to the existing historiography on chieftaincy in Ghana. It agrees with the assertion that chieftaincy in Ghana was under intense pressure during the Nkrumah regime and contends that although the Bono chiefs benefitted from their association with Nkrumah and the CPP, the processes leading to these gains caused significant problems for the Bono Kyempim chiefs and their people. This study is therefore important because it will add to the literature on the impact of partisan politics on the institution of chieftaincy in Ghana. It has discussed the implications of the active participation of chiefs in partisan politics in the Bono area of modern Ghana in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. The Agenda for Change

The Bono chiefs sustained a vision for change in their relations with Asante caused by the bitterness they harboured against Asante. Paramount chiefs in the Bono Kyempim states, including Nana Ameyaw, formed the Bono Kyempim Federation (BKF). The formation of the association created some significant legacies. The first was the rise of chiefs to consistently send his elders out as emissaries to other Bono states in the early 1950s to explain the aims and objectives of the Federation and to dispel all doubts which agitated the minds of chiefs.<sup>11</sup> He is believed to have urged his elders on with the following words;

- The time has come for all of us to seek to restore the glorious heritage of the Bono people. This is one of my immediate problems and I count upon you for your support. We will only seek the restoration of our lost villages through constitutional means so be steadfast.<sup>12</sup>

Ameyaw and his elders achieved some success. At the time of its inauguration at Takyiman on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1951, Dormaa, Abease, Suma and New Drobo had become members of the Bono Kyempim Federation.<sup>13</sup>

Nananom Akumfi Ameyaw and Agyeman Badu made it their aim to tour both pro-Bono and pro-Asante divisions to entreat other Bono states to join the Bono Federation.<sup>14</sup> Nana Agyeman Badu, for example, visited the Suma and Sampa states every month and successfully persuaded people to support their cause. In 1952, the Drobo district alone boasted 3576 people who supported secession from Asante as against 1807 who did not. Of the 1807, the D.C. of the Western Province of Asante (W.P.A.) asserted that a majority of them would support secession if there was a referendum.<sup>15</sup>

In pursuance of its cause, the BKF chiefs swore at public functions to fight relentlessly, by all constitutional means to free themselves, and other Bono from Asante domination and to improve their own conditions and those of their states. Members wished for a united front to help them pursue their agenda for a Bono Traditional Council separate from and independent of Asanteman. The Bono chiefs affirmed their belief in their capacity to manage their own affairs for a progressive society and improved conditions.<sup>16</sup> Members of the Bono Federation spoke of a national boundary between the northern part of Asante and southern part of Bono, with Asante occupying the southern section, and Bono the northern section. In a letter to the British government in August 1951, the Dormaahene reaffirmed this view when he stated that Bono did not participate in the ritual by Okomfo Anokye to unite Asante, and were therefore not part of the Asante kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

The sense of Bono consciousness intensified when between 1951 and 1952 the BKF States of Abease, Berekum, Dormaa, Drobo and Takyiman requested government to delete their names from the schedules of the Asanteman Council because they were being ill-treated by Asante although Asanteman refuted all claims of ill-treatment.<sup>18</sup> Although, in their letters and grievances, neither the BKF members, nor the BKF as a body made an explicit demand for a Bono region, their grievances suggested that the chiefs wanted to sever all traditional links with Asante.<sup>19</sup> They wanted a separate Bono existence which would enable them to be politically, constitutionally and administratively independent of Asante. The B.K.F. questioned the historical basis of their allegiance to the Golden Stool and sought to lead the campaign for self-determination for the Bono in the form of a separate state.<sup>20</sup> The British government however ignored the appeals by the Bono chiefs for recognition of their Federation and to accede to their petition to withdraw from the Asante confederacy.<sup>21</sup> Nana Agyeman Badu's return from London in 1954 provided an opportunity for the BKF to rekindle its demands. He reorganized the Federation into an active movement through rallies a few months after his return. But it was the formation of the National Liberation Movement (NLM) by some Asante young men that revived the fortunes of the BKF.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur, Brong Ahafo, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Statement of Grievances to Mate Korle Committee, Epilogue, PRAAD'S 2/104, paragraph 2.

<sup>13</sup> DC Wankyi Report on Takyiman State, July 1951, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/33, 76.

<sup>14</sup> DC western province of Ashanti to CC, 9 December 1952, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/3, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Report DC, WPA, 1951, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/45, 23.

<sup>16</sup> BKF to Governor through the Chief Commissioner (C.C) Ashanti 12 September 1951. The Federation stated that there can never be real peace and harmony between the Bono and Asante as long as the Asante looked down on the Bono as drawers of water and hewers of wood.

<sup>17</sup> Reconciliation Committee Notes, 11 August 1952, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/3. 94. This was the Dormaahene's contribution to the notes on the meeting of the Reconciliation Committee government set up to help resolve the Bono-Asante impasse.

<sup>18</sup> Chief Regional Officer to Asanteman Council, 10 May 1952, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/3.

<sup>19</sup> BKF Statement of Grievances, PRAAD'S, BRG 2/2/45, 62.

<sup>20</sup> Reconciliation Committee and BKF Minutes of Meeting 9 August 1951, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/44, 49.

<sup>21</sup> DC Wankyi, Report on the Takyiman, 76.

Secondly, chiefs and political parties formed an alliance with the National Liberation Movement (N.L.M.) in Kumasi in 1954 aimed primarily to achieve a federal independent Ghana with a liberal-democratic constitution. The movement declared that Asante was a nation and should remain so.<sup>22</sup> This objective appealed to Asante ethnic nationalist sensibilities but ran counter to the BKF's objectives to secede from the Asante confederacy and create a confederacy of Bono states.<sup>23</sup> Hence when the Asantehene, the Kumasi state and Asanteman openly declared their support for the NLM, the BKF formed an alliance with the CPP, the political opponent of NLM. From 1954, the Bono-Asante dispute therefore entered the arena of national partisan politics.

The effect of chiefs-CPP alliance was far-reaching. In the Dormaa traditional state for instance, the emergence of the NLM was a great relief for Nana Kwasi Ansu, the Mansenhene and other pro-Asante chiefs who had already declared their support for *Asanteman* and had refused to join the BKF. The *Mansenhene*, who until then (1954), was a staunch CPP supporter realized that he could secure his independence of the Dormaaahene by denouncing his support for the CPP. and perceived that he could gain a free-hand as a member of a different political party to deal with his rival the Dormaaahene. Furthermore, he hoped that an N.L.M. victory would be synonymous with his triumph over the Dormaaahene. Lastly, the secessionist call of the NLM to withdraw the Asante nation from the rest of the Gold Coast tied in very well with the chief's secessionist campaign to be independent of the Dormaaahene's authority. The Mansenhene assured *Okyeame* Bafuor Akoto of the NLM of his allegiance to the NLM and the Asantehene. *Okyeame* Akoto in return granted Mansen's request for paramountcy and admitted the state to the Asanteman Council.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the Mansenhene left the CPP fold with a section of his subjects. He now pursued his secession efforts with extra vigour, aimed at withdrawing the entire Mansen territory from the Dormaa state to pledge their loyalty to the Asante union.<sup>25</sup> Wamfie and a few other Bono towns thus became the Asante-backed NLM's outposts where Asante and the NLM perpetuated their interests.

In view of these developments, the CPP, which had in 1952 denounced the BKF as a regionalist movement, sought to exploit the opportunity offered by the BKC-Asanteman dispute to its advantage.<sup>26</sup> Nkrumah established close-relations with Nana Agyeman Badu I, the Dormaaahene, and a staunch leader of the Bono chiefs' federation. Nana Badu who stood in the 1951 general elections on the ticket of the United Gold Coast Convention (U.G.C.C.) against B. Yeboah Afari, the CPP candidate, now in 1954 joined the CPP. He personally took to the field to campaign for the CPP and persuaded his divisional chiefs to do likewise.<sup>27</sup> He organized rallies and attended them in his palanquin amidst drumming.<sup>28</sup> The pro-BKF chiefs and their pro-Asante opponents in Dormaa and other Bono states became more or less the respective leaders of the CPP and NLM and the rallying points of affiliation to the two parties.<sup>29</sup> Generally, after 1954, intra-state conflicts in Bono became synonymous with conflicts between the BKC-CPP alliance and the NLM-Asanteman alliance. Their friendship with Asante notwithstanding, the Mansenhene's action could not have any serious effect on Dormaa, the BKC's foothold. The chief could not persuade the other Mansen towns and villages to join the Asanteman-NLM fold. Rather, the political rivalry between the chiefs of Dormaa and the Mansen state intensified as they tried to outwit each other.

### 3. Effects of the Politicization

#### 3.1. CPP in Control of Chieftaincy

The rivalry between the two parties created its own problems. In the Dormaa state, the most effective measure by the CPP was to exile the Mansenhene and thirteen other leading members of the *matemeho* (separatist) faction and to enstool a pro-BKC chief in his place.<sup>30</sup> He went further to annex the entire Mansen territory and fully incorporate it into the Dormaa union of states. Some Mansen territories were assigned certain positions in the Dormaa state in order to keep them permanently in it. For example, the chief of Kofiasua, a Mansen town was assigned the Ntumtumhene of the Dormaa state. These measures caused the end of political rivalries and struggles between the two chiefs, and resolved the issue of recognizing Nana Agyeman Badu as the ultimate supreme leader of the Dormaa political hierarchy.<sup>31</sup>

The CPP government's relations with the BKF also enhanced the image of some chiefs and courted the loyalty of other Bono Kyempim chiefs and their subjects. For example, Nana Agyeman Badu I became an intimate friend of Dr. Nkrumah, and won the trust and confidence of the government of the CPP. Nkrumah called upon him occasionally to undertake important national assignments.<sup>32</sup> They helped also to effectively counter anti-BKC-CPP tendencies in the Bono Kyempim area.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1946-1960* (London: Oxford, 1970), 206.

<sup>23</sup>Drah, 138-139.

<sup>24</sup>Amponsah, "The CPP-NLM Conflict", 18-39.

<sup>25</sup>Yeboah Kodie, interview.

<sup>26</sup>*Gold Coast Legislative Assembly Debates, 25 March 1955.*

<sup>27</sup>Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 143-144.

<sup>28</sup>Amponsah, "The CPP-NLM Conflict", 18-39.

<sup>29</sup>Yeboah Kodie, interview.

<sup>30</sup>Yeboah Kodie, interview.

<sup>31</sup>Daniel Amponsah, "The CPP-NLM Conflict in Dormaa" (B.A. Research Paper, Dept. of History, University of Ghana, Legon, 1984), 11-35.

<sup>32</sup>Anon. "Commemorative Brochure", 13. Dr. Nkrumah appointed him as a member of a Commission of Enquiry set up to investigate the causes of chieftaincy dispute in the Upper (present Upper East and Upper West) Region in 1960.

<sup>33</sup>Drah, 160. In the meantime, in 1954, the Bono chiefs' movement changed its name from the Bono Kyempim Federation (BKF) to Bono Kyempim Council (BKC). This was probably a way of ensuring that the BKF, a Bono separatist movement was not confused

### 3.2. Attacks and Harassment

The emergence of the CPP-NLM rivalries also saw an increase in anti-NLM sentiments in the Bono area. It set the stage for the BKC-CPP alliance on the one hand and the NLM-Asante alliance on the other to consolidate their positions in their strongholds. For example, in May 1955, three young men of Takyiman who were accused by the Takyimanhene of planning to start a branch of the NLM in the town were summoned to the *Omanhene's* court. They were accused of betrayal of the BKC's cause and were severely beaten up by the people and fined by the traditional court.<sup>34</sup> In Berekum, the Youth Association attacked the pro-NLM chief and gave him the option to support the CPP or be destooled.<sup>35</sup>

In May 1955, Nana Agyeman Badu and Kwasi Yeboah, his linguist, were arrested in Kumasi by the Manhyia police during a visit to the city.<sup>36</sup> The Drobohene Nana Bosea Gynantwi III, was also said to have been harassed by the Asantehene's servants in Kumasi.<sup>37</sup> An anonymous letter of June 5, 1955 stated in part,

- Four to five days ago, the Asantehene have (sic) ordered some young men to beat all the subjects of the Dormaahene whom (sic) are staying in Kumasi...for the sole reason that their master Dormaahene has refused to serve the Asantehene anymore.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.3. Political Blackmail and the Asante Question

Amidst these uncertainties, the Asante Youth Association (A.Y.A.) planned to contact the Dormaahene on one hand and the Asanteman Council on the other hand through the Chief Commissioner of Asante to devise an immediate solution to the Bono-Asanteman crisis but Dormaa refused the offer.<sup>39</sup> Henceforth, the BKC resorted to what Drah describes as "political blackmail" to compel support from the CPP to intervene in Bono Kyempim's affairs. Disgruntled chiefs expressed their preparedness to join the CPP if they were supported by the party to withdraw from the Asante confederacy arguing that the close association of the Chief Officer of Kumasi with the Asanteman Council favoured Asante.<sup>40</sup> Others believed that a Bono region would relieve the Kumasi office of a great deal of work and considerably reduce the increased volume of work on the Kumasi office. The Bono region would reduce disputes between Asante and Bono supporters in Nkoranza, Berekum and the Dormaa state and a Regional Officer in Bono would be able to deal expeditiously with petitions, estimates and resolutions.<sup>41</sup> Although these were sound proposals, they were beset by many other problems.

First, there was the problem of determining the extent of the proposed administrative unit if a Bono region was created. For example, there was the problem of determining the position in the region of the pro-NLM Ahafo section which also had close links with the Kumasi royal house. There was also the difficulty in demarcating the regional boundaries, in this politically-tensed region of Asante to avoid cutting across traditional allegiances. The possibilities of disagreements in Bono over the siting of the new regional headquarters also existed. In the case of the latter problem, the debate oscillated between Takyiman, the earliest state in Bono, and Sunyani, which had since colonial times been the seat of the District Commissioner of the Western Province of Asante (WPA). More seriously, there was the danger that there would not be coordination in the new region since up to 1956, Wankyi, Nkoranza, Kintampo and Banda which were pro-Asante states continued to resist the BKC.<sup>42</sup> As expected, these pro-Asante states vehemently protested against the CPP's proposal to divide Asante into two regions. Wankyi, Duayaw Nkwanta and Bosomtwe Odomase sent out telegram messages to Dr. Nkrumah, Ghana's Prime Minister to withdraw the proposal to divide Asante.<sup>43</sup> They argued that the rise of the NLM had already resulted in violence, arson and anarchy in the Confederacy and if the Asante region was divided, more violence would follow. Wankyi for instance argued;

- The proposed division of Asante will lead to more strife, bloodshed, create great confusion and hamper ancient constitution of the people. It will also intensify the dispute, and thereby prevent peaceful co-existence in the Asante confederacy.<sup>44</sup>

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with the Asante agitation for a Ghanaian Federal State or because the CPP proposed to discuss the creation of Area Councils Drah believes that "The change of name was to ensure that the BKF would not be confused with the Asante Federal Movement".

<sup>34</sup>Aboagye, interview.

<sup>35</sup>D.C Wankyi to C.C. Ashanti, 7 March, 1955, PRAAD'S BRG 28/22/10, 3.

<sup>36</sup>Kodie, interview.

<sup>37</sup>Gyeabour, interview

<sup>38</sup>Agyeman Badu to the editor "Pioneer" 31 January 1955; and Benuye Kofi to the "Pioneer" September 27 September, 1954, 6; also Brong People's Organization (BPO) to Governor, December 12, 1955 and BKF to the Chief Regional Officer, Kumasi, February 16, 1955 and March 16, 1955. The BKC and the BPO wrote many letters to inform government of the change in order to differentiate the movement from the Asante federal movement. PRAAD BRG 2/2 /58

<sup>39</sup>Asante Youth Association AYA to Dormaahene 28 January 1951, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/2, 19.

<sup>40</sup>Drah, 119.

<sup>41</sup>Resolutions, Petitions and Protests, 5 April 1955, PRAAD'S BGR 28/21/12.

<sup>42</sup>Resolutions, Petitions and Protests, 5 April 1955, PRAAD'S BRG 28/21/12.

<sup>43</sup>Wankyi Chief to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, 2 April 1955, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/22, 34.

The 'Ashanti Pioneer' 6 April 1955; also Ameyaw-Nuamah, "History of Wankyi", 9-11 for details. The Wankyiman grievance stated; "We the members of the Wankyi state council shall not take this challenge lying down. We have fought and defeated Nkrumahism in the Wankyi state, and we shall fight it relentlessly and upon it completely from the whole country ... we shall refuse to recognize the BKC if it is set up" Wankyi's dislike of the CPP has a historical tint. One Nkrumah of Wankyi is said to have caused the first Wankyi king to disappear when the people were emerging from the Bonso hole. The king went back into the hole and never returned. Since

The Wankyi chief believed that the proposed creation of the Bono Region was not for the good of the Bono people, but was for political convenience of the CPP. In a letter to the "Ashanti Pioneer" on 6 April, 1955, the Wankyi chief and his elders declared;

- The CPP is in a dilemma, and having demonstrated their inability to settle the Ashanti affairs, the Nkrumah government is now adopting the communist method of creating confusion in Ashanti, in order to divert the attention of the Asanteman council to the Brong Kyempim Council, hoping that would give the CPP government a respite.<sup>45</sup>

Towards peaceful co-existence, some of the states that supported the BKC, also protested against the proposal to create the new region. For instance, Bekyem, a pro-Asante state, which had in 1954 joined the BKC, opposed any attempt to transfer Bekyem to Bonoland.<sup>46</sup> The *Sumahene*, Nana Twene Kwadwo and his elders, the Nsuatrehene, and the chiefs of Fiapre, Sunyani and Drobo individually sent telegram messages to oppose what Drobo described as "forceful disintegration of Asante by government".<sup>47</sup> They asked the CPP government to withdraw the resolution for the interest of peace and tranquility between the Bono and the Asante peoples.<sup>48</sup> Drobo even threatened to rejoin the Asanteman Council unless the CPP withdrew its proposal, arguing that development for them could be achieved successfully without dividing Asante into two regions as there had already been a number of confrontations between the BKC and the *Matemeho* (NLM) supporters in Berekum, Drobo, Suma, Takyiman, Dormaa, Wamfie, Odumase and also some Ahafo towns by 1955.<sup>49</sup> This had affected the social and economic lives of many people. Hence, following Dr. Nkrumah, the Prime Minister's speech, some states withdrew their membership of the Brong Council in the interest of peace. Out of the eleven principals pro-BKC states, only Abease, Dormaa, and Takyiman, because of their land dispute with Asante remained strongholds of the Council. Berekum, Drobo, Banda, Kintampo, Nkoranza, Wankyi, Odomasi and the Suma states shifted grounds to the NLM.<sup>50</sup> This compelled the BKC to attempt to regain its image and support. In response to the withdrawal of its members, the Council declared in a letter to the states concerned that the Prime Minister's statement coincided with the logical course of the BKC to create their own democratic institutions, in the interest of the chiefs and people of the BKC states.<sup>51</sup> But this did not convince the states which continued to owe allegiance to the Asantehene and the Asanteman council.

The argument against the creation of a separate Bono region appeared to be very sound considering the political rivalry between the pro-CPP and pro-NLM factions in Bono after 1954. Even more insidious was the question of traditional allegiance if the region was created. Would the chiefs continue to owe traditional allegiance to Asante or now owe allegiance to the Bono Kyempim House of chiefs? The CPP however gave little considerations to these concerns. It probably felt that there was no need to consider traditional loyalties when determining the borders of a region for administrative convenience. In Bono though, this was necessary in view of the frequent disputes within and between states on the question of allegiance to Bono and Asante chiefs. Indeed, from 1954, the Bono openly invited the CPP government to interfere in their chieftaincy matters. For example, in 1956 and 1958, the pro-Bono chiefs of Ofuman and Tanoso appealed to the CPP to intervene in the Bono Kyempim-Asante conflicts.<sup>52</sup> This provided an avenue for the CPP government to control chieftaincy issues in these states. Besides, when Nana Frimpong II was enstooled chief of Tanoso in 1958, he argued that it was "inexpedient to convey stool matters once more to Kumasi". He was also not prepared to swear the oath of allegiance to the Asantehene asserting that the CPP would create a new region and a House of Chiefs.<sup>53</sup>

The frequent conflicts between Antepim and Bosomtwe royal houses who supported Bono and Asante respectively in Odomase also needed to be resolved. These conflicts continually posed a problem in Odomase such that Sunyani in the 1950s refused to join Odomase in forming a local council.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, between 1952 and 1955, the Sunyani District alone had three separate Local Authorities, namely, the Sunyani Urban Council, the Sunyani Area Local Council and the Sunyani District Council resulting in frequent inter-state and intra-state conflicts manifested in the Dormaa-Mansen dispute.<sup>55</sup> Most people of the Mansen state were psychologically and physically oppressed. They lived in an atmosphere of fear for many years which took away much of their virility and courage.<sup>56</sup> In addition, Wamfie a fast growing and prosperous town which was on the same level with Dormaa on the eve of the CPP-NLM conflict was overtaken by Dormaa Ahenkro in all aspects of development. The CPP government and its officials intentionally neglected the town and other NLM strongholds in the provision of social amenities. The existing social services like

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then ninth-born children have been ill-treated in Wankyi. Indeed two common sayings in Wankyi are "Wankyi bekyiri Nkrumah nso bewo Badu" (Wankyis taboo the ninth born but begat the tenth), and "Nkrumah ye busufoo" (Nkrumah is an accursed person). This is one of the reasons for the fanatically anti-CPP (Nkrumah) attitude of most people of Wankyi despite Nkrumah's legitimate claim to be a citizen of Wankyi.

<sup>45</sup>Ameyaw-Nuamah, "History of Wankyi", 9-10.

<sup>46</sup>Bekyemhene to Asantehene, 5 April 1955, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/22.

<sup>47</sup>Bekyemhene to Asantehene, 5 April 1955, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/22.

<sup>48</sup>Bekyemhene to Asantehene, 5 April 1955, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/22.

<sup>49</sup>DC Wankyi to PC Sunyani, 13 March 1956, PRAAD'S RAO. 3/2/33. The letter stated, "Considerable bitterness between Dormaa and the Mansenhene has bedeviled peace and has caused violence from time to time"

<sup>50</sup>See Amponsah, "The CPP/NLM Dispute, 23-30 for details. See also Wankyihene to the editor *Ashanti Pioneer* 6 April 1955

<sup>51</sup>BKC, Letter to the editor *Ashanti Pioneer*, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/45, 1.

<sup>52</sup>Tanosohene to DC Wankyi, 6 January 1958, PRAAD'S BRG 3/2/14, 18.

<sup>53</sup>Nana Frimpong II to DC Wankyi 3 March 1958, PRAAD'S BRG 3/2/14, 18.

<sup>54</sup>Odumase-Sunyani State Affairs, 1958, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/11.

<sup>55</sup>Daniel Yeboah, "History of Dual – Chieftaincy in Sunyani Odomase" (B.A. research paper, Dept. of History, University of Ghana, 1990), 23. The Sunyani Area Local Council included Odomase, but excluded Sunyani township.

<sup>56</sup>Yeboah Kodie, interview.

schools and other community projects deteriorated and the development of the town was stagnated. The Wamfie people claimed also that the tarred street of Wamfie was destroyed upon the orders from the CPP officials in the region and was never repaired during the era of the CPP government.<sup>57</sup> The BKC alliance with the CPP therefore divided the Bono Kyempim states and states in the entire Bono area into pro-Bono and pro-Asante states.

### 3.4. Politicization of Chieftaincy

The CPP officials at the national level used their position to provide the needs of the BKC. For example, on February 21 1955, the Legislative Assembly adopted a private motion by S.W. Yeboah, CPP Member of Parliament for Sunyani asking for the publication of the report of the Mate Koole Commission set up to investigate the Asante-BKF dispute.<sup>58</sup> This was followed by a concession to Bono aspiration when in March 1955 Dr. Nkrumah dealt with several aspects of the Bono-Asante dispute in a statement in the Legislative Assembly. In the first place, he told the House that he had recommended to the Governor to publish the Mate Korle Committee's Report. The Prime Minister also informed the Assembly that he had presented to government the BKC's petition in which the chiefs of Dormaa, Takyiman, Abease, Odomase I, Drobo, Suma, Wiase, Sunyani and Bekyem had declared their secession from the Asanteman council.<sup>59</sup> Dr. Nkrumah stated again that the CPP was considering the BKC's petitions and was examining the possibility of setting up a Bono Kyempim Traditional Council, a Development Committee for the Bono area, as well as the establishment of two administrative regions for Asante.

In the CPP's view however, granting the BKC's demands for a Bono region immediately would result in a flood of similar secessionist demands.<sup>60</sup> The party was therefore reluctant to divide Asante which encouraged the Bono Kyempim chiefs to intensify their agitations. For instance, in a petition in October 1955, the Bekyemhene who had been destooled by the Kumasi State Council cautioned the CPP that he and his state might be compelled to betray their confidence in the party if the government failed to take prompt action to restore him, and recognize the BKC as a separatist movement.<sup>61</sup> In response to the BKC's petition, the CPP amended the State Council of Asante Ordinance of 1952.<sup>62</sup> This allowed all manner of chiefs the right of appeal to government. The Bekyemhene, then quickly made a direct appeal to the CPP government to restore him as chief. Following the Amendment, more Bono chiefs intensified requests to the CPP to create the Bono Region. The Asanteman and the NLM opposed the amendment of the Ordinance, arguing that it was a direct attack on the constitutional heritage and culture of the Asante nation.<sup>63</sup> The amendment of the Ordinance coincided with the debate between the NLM and the CPP as to what kind of constitution independent Ghana should have, and whether there should be any fresh elections before independence or not.

Whilst the NLM insisted that the constitution should be federal, the CPP argued that it should be unitary. On the issue of fresh elections, the NLM supported it while the CPP stated that there was no need. By early 1955, a constitutional stalemate existed between the two political parties.<sup>64</sup> The British government could not ignore the conflict between the Asante and the Bono Kyempim chiefs indefinitely. It invited Sir Fredrick Bourne, an expert on constitutional matters to help resolve the impasse. Sir Bourne arrived in Ghana in September 1955 and started his investigations. In his report, he advised against the creation of a federation asserting that it was not necessary for so small a country.<sup>65</sup> He advised that the long-standing differences between the Bono and the Asanteman Council notwithstanding, there was no justification for a separate region since Bonoland was small and inhabitants divided on the issue of secession.<sup>66</sup> The CPP agreed in principle with the recommendation and withheld its proposal to create the Bono region.

Despite Bourne's recommendation, the BKC members continued their demands for separation from Asante arguing that a separate region would facilitate Bono development and remove the sense of neglect among the Bono people, especially those living furthest away from Kumasi.<sup>67</sup> The Dormaa chief, for instance, complained that the Asante commissioners rarely visited the state and lacked both an understanding of the people and an interest in their welfare.<sup>68</sup> In February 1956, the CPP invited the NLM and the BKC to the Achimota Conference convened to discuss the future system of government for Ghana.<sup>69</sup> With regard to Bono and Asante, the

<sup>57</sup>Yeboah Kodie, interview.

<sup>58</sup>Arthur, *The Brong Ahafo outlook*, 43-44; also *Gold Coast Legislative Assembly Debates*, 18-2-1955.

<sup>59</sup>*Gold Coast Legislative Assembly Debates*, 25 March 1955.

<sup>60</sup>Drah, 139.

<sup>61</sup>Drah, 121.

<sup>62</sup>Arthur, *The Brong Ahafo Outlook*, 47. Under the 1952 Ordinance, only paramount chiefs could appeal to the decisions of the Asanteman Council, or direct to the Governor to resolve constitutional issues.

<sup>63</sup>Drah, 141. At an Emergency Meeting of Asanteman in October 1955, Nana Esumejahene stated:

"Nkrumah and his followers have found Asante a hard nut to crack, owing to it peculiar and unique culture and traditions ... By this bill, Nkrumah is determined to destroy Asante both as a nation and as a people, for he is asking for power to determine who should be and who should not be a chief".

<sup>64</sup>Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and change*, 186-187.

<sup>65</sup>Drah, 141.

<sup>66</sup>Drah, 141.

<sup>67</sup>Arthur, *Brong Ahafo Outlook*, 50.

<sup>68</sup>Resolutions, Petitions and Protests, 5 April 1955 PRAAD'S BRG 28/21/12.

<sup>69</sup>BKC to the Prime Minister, 16 February 1955, PRAAD'S BRG 2/2/45, The BKC was invited through the Asanteman and in reply they reminded the CPP to publish the Mate Korle Committee's Report. They emphasized that they had already declared to government

conference was expected to discuss the report of the Constitutional Adviser and to propose a solution to its recommendations.<sup>70</sup> The NLM did not see the need to discuss the report and therefore declined the invitation to the Conference. The Conference apparently gave a sympathetic hearing to the Bono delegation which was led by Nana Agyeman Badu I. The conference's report released the same year, recommended to government to consider the case of a separate Assembly for the Bono area and a House of Chiefs when Regional Assemblies were being set up.<sup>71</sup> In parts of the White Paper on the report of the constitutional adviser, published in April 1956, the CPP government accepted in principle the establishment of a separate region.

The government proposed to consult the district and local councils in the Bono area on this issue to find out if a majority of the Bono councils favoured the creation of a separate Bono region.<sup>72</sup> The CPP appears to have considered that reluctance in its support for the Bono Kyempim's course could alienate the large support it had in the Bono area.<sup>73</sup> It would further weaken the CPP's support in Asante, as the emergence of the NLM in 1954 had affected the CPP's performance in the 1954 general election in Asante.<sup>74</sup> This proposal came as a surprise to the NLM. It rejected the government's proposal, and rather urged government to adopt a federal constitution to administer the country. It continued to press for what it called a constitution that would provide adequate safeguards for individual and minority rights and effective powers for the region within a unitary state framework.<sup>75</sup> By contrast, the BKC welcomed the CPP's decision to create the region. It demonstrated its pleasure by voting massively in the 1956 elections. The CPP polled 41,222 as against 32,881 for the NLM and its allied parties in the seven Bono and Ahafo constituencies and won four of the six seats in Bonoland.<sup>76</sup>

In May 1958, the CPP government appointed B. Yeboah Afari as Regional Commissioner and introduced the Repeal and Restrictions Bill in December 1958, which received an accent of the Queen of England in the same month. This created an opportunity for the CPP to introduce into the National Assembly the Bill establishing the Brong-Ahafo Region and a House of Chiefs. On March 20, 1959, under a Certificate of Urgency, the Bill passed through all its stages, received the Governor General's approval, and became operative on April 4, 1959, when the region and its House of Chiefs were inaugurated in Sunyani by the CPP government. Although the Bono area now assumed the position of an administrative and a judicial division, the alliance created financial/economic and social problems.

### 3.5. Monetary/economic

The financial effects of the BKC-CPP alliance were many. Takyiman alone spent £5000 on court cases involving the dispute. Also, the struggle generally disrupted agricultural activities in many Bono states. It diverted people's attention from farming because of the general atmosphere of insecurity in Bono during the 1950s.<sup>77</sup> Farm products were allowed to rot due to lack of attention and care. In Wamfie and Wamafo, for example, it is said that large acres of cocoa were not harvested in 1955, and ripe cocoa pods were left to rot.<sup>78</sup> In addition, burning of farms became very rampant. This reduced the output of cocoa and other farm products and caused other hardships in the Bono area. For example, the Dormaa district experienced a severe famine unequalled in its history. The people of Wamfie allegedly consumed the corms of cocoyam due to the acute shortage of foodstuffs in the district. As expected, the people of Dormaa, Takyiman, and Odumase, which had Asante residents were the most affected. People in these states became indebted to money lenders who charged very high interests.<sup>79</sup> Besides, the conflict generally stimulated farming activities, particularly, among supporters of the NLM as they took to large-scale farming after the CPP-NLM conflict.<sup>80</sup> The conflict also forced many people to flee their permanent homes for the remote forest areas in Ahafo and Sehwi. The migrants created their own settlements in these new areas of refuge and engaged in the large-scale cultivation of cocoa. By the end of 1956, many supporters of the NLM who had escaped harassment from the BKC-CPP alliance had become the wealthiest Bono citizens.<sup>81</sup>

### 3.6. Status of Traditional States/Villages

In the social sector, the neglect of the pro-Asante states instilled in residents the spirit of co-operation and self-reliance. Their neglect compelled the affected states to organize themselves to undertake communal labour to develop their states. Through communal efforts, the NLM-backed states undertook several development projects in the 1950s and afterwards. For instance, the Wamfie people

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their intention to secede from the confederacy and could not be represented by the Asanteman, nor the NLM. Fortunately for the BKC the NLM turned down the invitation.

<sup>70</sup>Drah, 141.

<sup>71</sup>Drah, 142. The conference was unanimous that the BKC delegation was considerable in material and fact

<sup>72</sup>Drah, 143.

<sup>73</sup>Drah, 139.

<sup>74</sup>Drah, 139.

<sup>75</sup>Drah, 143. The impasse over the new constitution compelled the Secretary of State to request the CPP to hold fresh elections to determine the strength or otherwise of support for its constitutional proposals. The CPP eventually won the elections.

<sup>76</sup>*Ghana Evening News*, 19 July, 1956, 1-3, for detail results.

<sup>77</sup>Adane, interview.

<sup>78</sup>

<sup>79</sup>Adane, interview.

<sup>80</sup>Kwame Arhin, "Aspects of Colonial District Administration, A case study of the North-Western Ashanti", *Research Review* 7 no. 3, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, (1973).

<sup>81</sup>Drah, p. people also moved out of the Bono area due to Asanteman's orders against cultivation of cocoa in the early 1950s



built the Local Authority Primary School in 1957 through communal labour.<sup>82</sup> However, the BKC alliance with the CPP left a deep and lasting mark on the Bono states. One significant social effect was that by 1959, the conflict had drastically silenced the pro-Asante supporters, who, between 1935 and 1956, were fearless, radical, and aggressive. This was mainly due to the NLM's defeat in the 1956 general elections.<sup>83</sup> On the contrary, followers of the CPP government and the pro-BKC/CPP states became more aggressive and radical and mounted a ruthless crackdown on the pro-Asante people in Odomase, Tanoso, Tuobodom, Ofuman and Wamfie.<sup>84</sup> These states, including Dormaa, Antepim Odomase, Anwiam, Amasu, Ofuman II, Nsuhia, Takyiman and Asikasu among many others perceived themselves to have the support of the government of the day and became known for their intolerance and aggressiveness in the 1950s and even afterwards.

Moreover, the CPP government rewarded the CPP-backed states with development projects. For example, the Dormaa Secondary School which was opened in 1948 became a government-assisted school and was granted the highest form (sixth-form) status in 1958. In the same year, the CPP government commissioned street lights in Dormaa, Takyiman, Sunyani and Nsuatre, and pipe born water in Dormaa. The government also built a clinic and a post office at Anwiam in the Dormaa District.<sup>85</sup>

The last most important social effect of the BKC-CPP alliance was on the education of Bono children. Since the conflict created an atmosphere of insecurity, parents were not encouraged to send their children to school outside their homes. This meant for instance that the people of Wamfie, Bosomtwe Odomase and other pro-Asante states could not send their wards to the Secondary Schools in Takyiman and Dormaa Ahenkro which were the only Secondary Schools in the Bono Kyempim states in the early 1950s. Most Bono Kyempim citizens did not also send their children to schools in Kumasi for fear that they would be kidnapped or molested by the Asante. Then also is the fact that the Bono who settled in very remote areas in the Sehwi and Ahafo forests could not give their children formal education.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, the youth of belligerent states became interested in chieftaincy matters and preferred staying at home to dabble in chieftaincy activities than to pursue high education.<sup>87</sup> The low interest in high education persisted until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in several Bono Kyempim states.

#### 4. Conclusion

In 1948, the Bono Kyempim chiefs protested against their inclusion in the Asante Confederacy, the constitution and decision of the Committee of Privileges, the unilateral change of name of the traditional council by Asante, the renewal of the mode of swearing of the Asantehene's oath, the disbursement of the Asante National Fund, the concentration of the confederacy's court in Kumasi, the huge native court fines and the modalities for awarding the Asanteman scholarships. When the British government ignored petitions by the Bono chiefs to withdraw their states from the Asante confederacy, the Bono Kyempim chiefs suspected this to be a ploy by the British for Asante to resume its pre-colonial position.

The CPP which had objected to the BKC's invitation to support her between 1948 and 1954, changed its decision. The impetus for the change in position was the formation of the regionally-based N.L.M. which was strongly supported by the Asantehene and the Asanteman Council. By 1959, the delegates to the Achimota Conference and Parliament had endorsed the CPP's decision to create the Bono Ahafo Region and the Bono Ahafo Region House of Chiefs. The CPP-alliance with Bono chiefs however resulted in financial losses, cases of arson, chieftaincy disputes, confrontations between party opponents, displacement of people and reduction in the enrolment of Bono children in schools. To a very large extent, the Bono chiefs' alliance with the CPP contributed significantly to cause disaffection, animosity and intense suspicion between the Bono Kyempim chiefs and their Asante counterparts in the 1950s. This situation has continued into the twenty-first century without a concrete solution.

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<sup>82</sup>Yeboah Kodie, interview.

<sup>83</sup>Adane, interview.

<sup>84</sup>Yeboah Kodie, interview.

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<sup>86</sup>Christian Messenger, 21 June 1930. In 1930 the British government established the first elementary school in Sunyani.

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