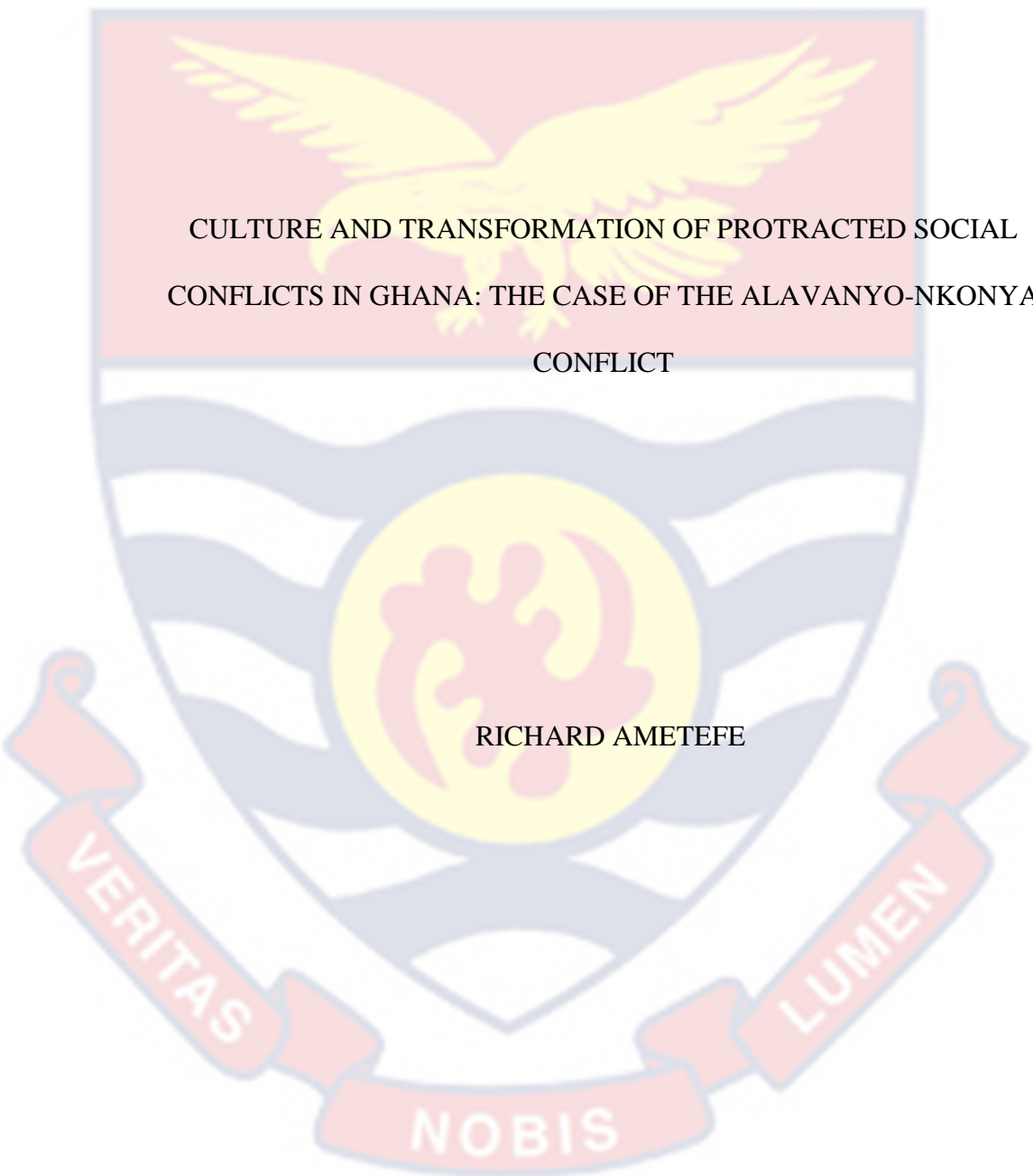UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CULTURE AND TRANSFORMATION OF PROTRACTED SOCIAL

CONFLICTS IN GHANA: THE CASE OF THE ALAVANYO-NKONYA

CONFLICT

RICHARD AMETEFE

2024

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CULTURE AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION OF PROTRACTED

SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN GHANA: THE CASE OF THE ALAVANYO-

NKONYA CONFLICT

BY

RICHARD AMETEFE

Thesis Submitted to the Department of Integrated Development Studies of
the School for Development Studies, College of Humanities and Legal
Studies, University of Cape Coast, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Development Studies

JULY 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: …………………………… Date: ……………………

Name:…………………………………………………………………………….

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and the presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: ………………… Date: ……………………..

Name:…………………………………………………………………………………

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Name:…………………………………………………………….…………

Co-Supervisor's Signature:……………………Date:…………………………….

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ABSTRACT

The Alavanyo--Nkonya conflict is a century old due to the failure of conflict resolution mechanisms over the years particularly, the formal court system. The protractedness has been attributed to the liberal peace mechanisms that are external to the indigenous ways of the African. This study explored the use of culture and conflict transformation mechanisms for restoring durable and sustainable peace in the Alavanyo-Nkonya case. A qualitative case study design was used involving 23 key informants purposively selected and interviewed while 30 participants were conveniently selected for five focus group discussions. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. The study found that both ethnic groups have their defined groups based on ancestry and histories that differentiate them. The two histories place the ethnic groups in the area at different times and the Alavanyo allude to the Nkonya arriving before them. The study found the conflict has transformed from a resource conflict to an ethnic conflict subsequently shifting the focus from land to deep-rooted identity-based issues and firstcomer and latecomer claims that have dominated the issues around the conflict. The mechanisms that were deployed to restore durable peace lacked context and application as they were mostly Western or hybridized with a few traditional ones which were not fully implemented. Culturally-informed, contextual and indigenous mechanisms established the longest peace period and led to some transformation of the conflict although the conflict relapsed due to inconclusive implementation of the mechanisms. The study concludes that indigenous strategies and mechanisms are sidelined and not effectively applied, therefore, requiring a conscious effort towards the use of these which need to be a sustainable part of the peace mechanisms and attempts. Nonetheless, the indigenous mechanisms have proven to be meaningful, accessible, and affordable. Deep-rooted identity issues that underlie the conflict must be considered besides the focus on land. Therefore, the National Peace Council, West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the government and the traditional councils of both ethnic groups should develop comprehensive mechanisms that integrate indigenous ways and cultural practices of the parties for an effective transformation and to legitimise the culturally-informed conflict transformation processes.

KEY WORDS

Alavanyo-Nkonya

Conflict Transformation

Cultural Sustainability

Culture

Indigenous

Protracted Social Conflicts

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DEDICATION

To my lovely family and Dr. Kenneth Shelton Aikins.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CST	Cultural Sustainability Theory
CT	Conflict Transformation
CTT	Conflict Transformation theory
DCD	District Coordinating Director
DCE	District Chief Executive
DISEC	District Security Council
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAF	Ghana Armed Forces
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.
GPS	Ghana Police Service
IWT	Indigenous Wholistic Theory
MCE	Municipal Chief Executive
NAMC	Nkonya-Alavanyo Conflict Mediation Committee
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NKOSEC	Nkonya Secondary School (Now Nkonya Senior High School)
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NPC	National Peace Council
PSC	Protracted Social Conflict
RHoC	Regional House of Chiefs
RPC	Regional Peace Council

VRCC   Volta Regional Coordinating Council

VRHC   Volta Regional House of Chiefs

UN   United Nations

WANEP   West African Network for Peacebuilding

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Conflict is a feature of human society that arises out of differences in backgrounds, contradictions in societal structures and the pursuit of incompatible goals (Agyeman, 2008; Coser, 1956; Faleti, 2006; Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 2003; 2014; Marx & Engels, 1967). Conflicts can be destructive and unbeneficial or constructive and beneficial to society. Constructive conflict engenders reforms in societal structures and thus, leads to building stronger relationships. Constructive conflicts also lead to changes in attitudes and behaviours of the conflicting parties as they help initiate reforms of social structures that cause conflicts by reducing injustices and other forms of conflicts within society (Galtung, 1996; Goetschel, 2009). Destructive conflicts, on the other hand, result in threats to human security and safety and result in human displacements, increase in refugee numbers, destruction of property, diversion of foreign direct investments and aid, capital flight, breakdown in social interaction, governance and family structures, breakdown in social values and norms and destruction of agriculture (Ahiave, 2013; Kendie, Osei-Kufuor & Boakye, 2014).

Despite several attempts that are being made towards the restoration of peace and the resolution or management of violent conflicts, countries continue to experience many violent conflicts which emerge from sources such as politics, religion, competition over resources, power contestations and racial and ethnic differences (Ramsbotham et al, 2017; Richmond, 2010). While many inter-state conflicts have been resolved using Western mechanisms or strategies,

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many intra-state conflicts have defied amicable resolutions using these mechanisms, suggesting a failure of the mechanisms to resolve these conflicts.

Resolution mechanisms such as preventive diplomacy, deployment of troops for peacekeeping, imposition of curfews, disarmament, demobilisation of combatants and reconstruction of societies, third-party mediation, arbitration, negotiation, the establishment of commissions of enquiry, tribunals and the use of courts or litigation have not been successful in resolving the conflicts. Some of these conflicts continue to persist due to the ineffectiveness of these Western-centred mechanisms that are based on liberal and republican ideals. The mechanisms, therefore, lack context in their application to African intra-state conflicts (Adejumobi, 2004; Anumel, et al, 2021; Ateng et al, 2018; Bukari, 2013; Kieh Jr., 2010; Paris, 1997; Rupesinghe, 1987; Tongeren, 2013).

Many of these mechanisms were unable to remove the 'undesirable malignant' (conflicts) without considering the root causes such as identity and basic human needs which are embedded in indigenous knowledge in the culture and traditions of the parties to the conflicts. Western-based exclusivist mechanisms have been cited for their failure to make room for mending the broken relationships between the parties unlike the indigenous African mechanisms that are home-grown, culturally suitable, conform to their daily practices and address issues of context and relationships between the conflicting parties (Adejumobi, 2004; Bamidele, 2014; Kanu, 2019; Tongeren, 2013; Zartman, 1999).

In this study, I conceptualise protracted social conflict (PSC) as a complex, severe, enduring, often bloody and violent conflict between groups, that is caused by identity issues coupled with a lack of access to basic needs of

survival. My conceptualisation identifies with those of Azar's (1990) and Beaudoin's (2013) characterisations of protracted conflicts, which intimate that protracted conflicts occur in a multi-ethnic society where groups are marginalised and deprived of accessing resources based on their identity and other social and economic needs.

According to the PSC theory, protracted conflicts emerge as a result of groups being denied access to basic human needs, identity and security contestations, the role of the state, international political and economic linkages (colonial factor) and involvement of the military in politics (Azar, 1990). These conflicts can be traced to the history of the parties. Furthermore, Azar posits that initial conditions which include colonial legacy, domestic historical setting, and the multi-communal nature of the society, combine to play roles that go a long way in shaping the genesis of PSCs. When the needs of individuals or groups are denied on the basis of their identity, they resort to arms to take their fair share of the resources to which they believe they are entitled.

The theory has been critiqued by other theories such as the economic theory by Gurr (1970), Burton (1997) Collier and Hoefller (2004) who base the protractedness on greed, and resource inadequacy among other issues. Protracted conflicts must therefore be transformed at the right point when the parties are willing and factors support peace. Ripeness is the appropriate time to deploy interventions to transform conflicts and achieve peace (Coleman, Hacking, Stover, Fisher-Yoshida, & Nowak, 2008; Zartman, 2001).

Conflict transformation is defined here as the process where conflicts are deliberately transmuted into non-violent conflicts through a process that places much emphasis on restructuring the relationships (attitudes and behaviours) that

exist between parties to a conflict, ultimately, changing aspects of the culture of the people, especially the identity-related issues which encourage conflicts and help foster peaceful coexistence between the parties (Dudouet, 2007; Lederach, 1994; 2003; Rhodes, 2008). Conflict transformation reflects emancipation and empowerment of the local units, structures and residents to design and adopt dynamic ways of ending violent explosions that threaten their existence unlike the earlier approaches such as conflict management or conflict resolution which are state-centred where the agents are the states, the international community and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Richmond, 2010).

Richmond argued that there are four main generations of theory in peace and conflict studies. The first generation emerged from realist views that peace is the management of conflicts. It considers conflict management approaches that consider order and peace as the absence of violence which is embedded in realist views. The peaceful existence of the state is to be achieved via high-level diplomacy, mediation, UN peacekeeping, negotiation, and other activities at the national level within the ambits of international relations (Paris, 2004).

The second generation revolves around issues of human needs, eliminating violence, and dealing with structural violence, and injustice against individuals. This considers ideas from philosophies like structuralism, idealism, and liberalism, and adds that peace can be achieved through the meeting of human needs via conflict resolution. The third generation focuses on multidimensional approaches at macro levels of society towards instituting peace. This generation espouses liberal peace ideologies among others (Richmond, 2001; 2005; 2010). The fourth generation deals with conflict in ways that lead to building consensus, establishing a "legitimate, discursive and

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material" emancipation, and not just repeating the previous generations of external top-down approaches (Richmond, 2010). In the fourth generation, Richmond notes how some international relations notions of liberal peacebuilding, such as self-determination, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are transformed by their engagement with non-Western locals which peacebuilding and conflict transformation often brings about.

The indigenous wholistic theory addresses the grievances of conflicting parties by contextualising indigenous knowledge embedded in traditions and the total experiences of a people. The indigenous wholistic theory postulates that indigenous knowledge holds more promise for dealing with local problems. The local conflict management, peacebuilding or conflict transformation mechanisms that have been adopted and used under this theory are indigenous to the people and emanate from their culture and traditions and appreciate the context in which they are applied. The mechanisms subscribed to by the theory are local and sensitive to the traditional, cultural and social milieu in Africa, where values and relationships remain important to the conflicting parties. Here both sides win instead of win for one party and lose for the other.

The proponents state that indigenous wholistic theory has its focus on the need for culture and indigenous knowledge and how they are used to solve social and cultural problems (Absolon, 1993; 2010; 2019). The indigenous methods have also been criticised for not being gender or age-sensitive. Thus, a growing literature alludes to the effectiveness of mechanisms when the traditional is blended with the Western forming hybrid mechanisms (Ibrahim, 2018). This happens when the local traditional or indigenous mechanisms meet with the Western mechanisms. Also, mediators also come to the mediation with

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their backgrounds and differences making the conflicting parties consider them as "strangers" (Agyei et al, 2023) or outsiders. Sometimes they are positive and other times, they are not. So, the mediator's worldview matters and cannot be discounted in effectively applying mechanisms and attaining peace. The need to mainstream and contextualise culture has been made by Abu-Nimar (2003), Avruch (2006), Dudouet (2007), Lebaron (2003), Lederach (1995; 2003; 2014), and Maiese (2004) who suggest conflict transformation as a replacement to conflict resolution because it considers the indigenous ways of doing things and also the ingenuity of the local people (Adjei & Adebayo, 2014; Boege, 2006; Ibrahim, 2018; Kwesi, 2013; Tongeren, 2013), as suggested by the indigenous wholistic theory.

It must be noted that before colonialism, African societies had their indigenous conflict cessation mechanisms (Adjei & Adebayo, 2014). Mechanisms such as the invocation of curses of Akwa Ibom in Nigeria, gacaca of Rwanda, *mato oput* of Northern Uganda, bathing bitter herbs in Mozambique, *gadaa, michu and lubabasa* of Ethiopia, and the *guuir*t of Somaliland, blood bath in Kpandai and rites of the earth cult in Ghana are some indigenous mechanisms which point to this fact (Isike & Uzodike, 2011). Adjei and Adebayo (2014) iterated that every conflict is local since the local settings provide strategies that should be adopted by the people to survive the consequences.

According to the indigenous wholistic theory, colonisation and globalisation have alienated indigenous, non-Western societies from their knowledge and links with their land and environment (Absolon, 2019). These have been substituted with Western-centered ideals rooted in liberal and

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neoliberal thought, which left colonial institutions, democratic elections, court systems and rule of law, liberal economy and markets (Kwesi, 2013). Scholars have noted that the application of homegrown conflict resolution, transformation and management strategies that were based on indigenous foundations in Africa have worked to perfection in a conflict situation (Adjei & Adebayo, 2014; Boege, 2006; Nwolise, 2005). Boege asserts that indigenous mechanisms provide for inclusion and participation as the parties are encouraged to adopt integrative mechanisms (win-win) and not the Western divisive (win-lose) mechanisms. This is conflict transformation.

For instance, culturally-informed conflict transformation was seen from the Dagbon experience where various resolution approaches, including commissions of enquiry, the courts, and mediation were used but to no avail. However, the Committee of Eminent Chiefs, appointed by President Kufuor, later changed their initial approach of arbitration and mediation (both based on conflict resolution) and considered the culture of the parties to transform the stale relationship between the Andani and the Abudu gates to the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict. The Abudu and Andani are the two families that rotate the ascension to the Dagbon skin. The Dagbon kingdom of the Dagomba is located in Tamale, Yendi and surrounding towns (Awedoba, 2009; Tonah, 2005; 2012). The use of Dagbon traditions and culture led to the transformation of the conflict marked by the funeral and burial of the former *YaNaa* (the paramount chief of Dagbon) and the installation of *YaNaa* Abubakri II in 2019 (Adam, 2021).

The success of the conflict transformation approaches in reducing violent conflicts and restoring peaceful relationships in conflicting areas shows peace can be achieved through using culture (Lederach, 1995; 2003). Thus, daily

traditional adherences of disputing parties can be used to cause changes to the structures that cause conflicts and prevent conflict from becoming protracted. Therefore, making cultural practices and adherences an integral part of conflict transformation is a sustainable way of transforming conflicts (Richmond, 2010). Thus, the need for cultural sustainability which is the recovery, protection and handing down to future generations the cultural identities, cultural values, traditional practices and histories (Farsani, Coelho & Costa, 2012).

Cultural sustainability considers cultural variation as fundamentally important in conflict resolution and transformation (Avruch, 2006, Lederach, 1994; 1995). Cultural Sustainability calls for the integration and mainstreaming of cultural practices into transformative approaches and becomes central to the ways that are used to restore durable peace. The study therefore uses the cultural sustainability theory, which according to Soini and Birkeland (2016), stipulates that societal transformation must be done with emphasis on the culture and traditions of the people in the society in mind. Thus, importance must be given to the culture of the particular society and used in making peace between disputants.

Although culture is generally considered a way of life of a group (Tylor, 1871), this definition is too broad and vague for analytical purposes since everything can be considered as culture (Avruch, 2006; Linbach & Zuckerman, 2009). Therefore, for this study, culture is a system based on which meanings of happenings around us, are interpreted and duly reacted to and based on which identities are formed, assigned and handed down to generations (Eller, 1999; Ross, 2009). It is that phenomenon that provides a framework for organising people's day-to-day lives, placing the individual and others in the frameworks,

interpreting the actions and intentions of others, determining the identities of others, and influencing individuals and groups toward some actions and away from others (Avruch 2006; Linbach & Zuckerman, 2009).

The consideration of the cultural backgrounds of the disputants brings to bear issues of identity and hegemony (Ross, 2009). The identity of a people is their culture as it affords them due recognition which sets them apart from other groups. This cultural identity is the basis for conflict transformation as it sets the basis for diversity in society when these differences are harnessed properly for purposes of harmony (Ateng, et al., 2018). In studies conducted on this issue in Africa, it has been established that the traditional African methods of transforming conflicts are more effective and culturally acceptable to the parties involved (see Absolon, 2010; Adejumobi, 2004; Bell, 2002; Graybill, 2004; Paris, 1997; Tongeren, 2013; Udofia, 2011; Zartman, 1999; 2000).

Methods such as the *Gacaca* was used to restore peaceful relations between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide (Kieh Jr., 2010) while the *Ubuntu* philosophy helped to transform the strained and conflictual relationships between the ethnic and racial groups in South Africa after apartheid in 1990, according to Bell. These methods are rooted in traditional African ways of handling conflicts, therefore, re-adopting them guarantees a high success rate, since the mechanisms aim to mend relationships, according to the PSC, indigenous wholistic and conflict transformation theories. These must be sustained and revitalised through a constant renewal of the change process, according to the cultural sustainability theory.

In Ghana, many communal, inter and intra-group conflicts have become protracted. Prominent among them are chieftaincy, ethnic, resource or land-

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related, religious and some political or electioneering conflicts (Ahiave, 2013; Anumel et al, 2021; Kendie et al., 2014; Tonah & Anamzoya, 2016; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). While acknowledging that other forms of conflicts such as religious, sports and youth violence have been experienced in Ghana, the fact remains that ethnic, chieftaincy and resource conflicts have become intractable as they have defied resolution attempts by stakeholders (Duah, 2014; Alidu, 2013; Bukari, Osei-Kufuor & Bukari, 2022; Tonah & Anamzoya). Some examples of the chieftaincy conflict are Winneba chieftaincy and the Chereponi chieftaincy conflicts; land resource conflicts between Peki and Tsito, and Konkomba and Nanumba; and ethnic conflicts such as between Kusasi and Mamprusi, Konkomba and Nanumba and Konkomba against the Chokossi (Kendie et al, 2014; Tsikata & Seini, 2004).

This study targets the land resource cum ethnic conflict between Alavanyo (Ewe) and Nkonya (Guan) ethnic groups, and how the cultures of the two groups can be harnessed to transform the violent and destructive aspects of the conflict to build a peaceful stage for restructuring the relationship between the parties. The conflict between the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups was non-violent from the onset (1897-1913) during which various mechanisms of resolution, management and transformation were used. Some of these methods are traditional mediation and arbitration initiated and led by chiefs and people of both communities, the ethnic groups being urged to co-own and use the piece of land, the exchange of gifts during the celebration of festivals, durbars, peace efforts initiated by the regional house of chiefs, and invocation of ancestors and curses, and planting of the famous *Anya* or *Ntomeh* trees by both sides.

Some of these mechanisms, such as litigation worked briefly while others failed immediately after implementation (Duah, 2014; Mensah et al., 2016). The conflict, however, became violent after and deepened from 1913, thus, leading to the German colonial government who had oversight responsibility over the area at the time tasking Dr Hans Gruner, a German cartographer, in 1913 to map the area. This map, the infamous Gruner map, became the major source of evidence for attempts made at restoring peace between the Alavanyo and Nkonya using the courts or adjudication, arbitration, and court-led mediation (Agyei, 2023; Ahiave, 2013; Duah, 2014; Kendie et al., 2014; Mensah, Mensah & Oteng, 2016; Midodzi & Imoro, 2011; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). The boundaries on the map became the bone of contention and have led to several disagreements between the groups to date.

The disputed piece of land is a resource which the parties consider a major source of livelihood. Members of both ethnicities farm on the piece of land, and hunt for animals, cocoa, and forage for cola and cash crops such as cashew, coffee, and rare plant species with medicinal values and felling timber for sale (Tsikata and Seini, 2004). These benefits of the land are also what has made it an avenue for contention and led to the changing dynamics of the conflict (Duah, 2014; Kendie et al, 2014; Midodzi & Imoro, 2013; Penu & Osei-Kufuor, 2016; Tsikata & Seini). The conflict has led to violent clashes with most deaths happening in 1923, 1983, 2003, 2004, 2012, and 2013 (Kendie et al), 2017, and 2019 (Asare, 2023). The violence is mostly triggered by actions from any of the two groups coupled with the failure of earlier mechanisms that were deployed to end the violence that has characterised the conflict. As a result, the violence keeps recurring; sometimes during the curfews when the military and police

personnel have been deployed to keep the peace pulled out due to reductions in violence (Duah, 2014; Mensah et. al., 2016).

The protractedness of the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict has been linked to factors such as the relegation of traditional cultural practices of the groups in the mechanisms that were adopted. To begin with, in conflict management, conflict transformation and peacebuilding literature, the local language of the conflicting parties has to be the medium of exchange at the hearings (Bell, 2002). In South Africa, the indigenous Zulu, Tswane and Afrikaans languages were used to interact and establish meanings and values embedded therein. In the Rwandan case too, the indigenous language of the groups was used and this led to a clear understanding of proverbs, metaphors and adages among others. Language facilitates dialogue, which is key to achieving peace as it helps make meanings without anything losing its meaning. Using local languages to facilitate dialogue between disputing parties helps achieve the desired peace between the parties (Asmamaw, 2014; Kieh Jr, 2010).

Music and dance have also been found to provide a certain level of relief to disputants in times of transformation. Rothman (1999) stated the essence of music in peace attempts enhances the chances for the achievement of peace. Music heals the parties and also binds the people together as it transcends all bounds (Urbain, 2015). Urbain establishes how music has played a major role in the establishment of peace in Rwanda. Jordanger (2008) added that in Chechnya, music stimulates a range of emotions and perceptions that can be uplifting and which can move people towards peace and harmony. Establishing that music has a healing and soothing power and has the propensity to draw people toward peace in times of conflicts and violence, then there is the need to

investigate how these cultural practices (sculptures, paintings, music, libation pouring, festivals, etc.) can combine with conflict transformation approaches to make them context-specific to Ghana. Thus, culture is a resource for conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Statement of the Problem

The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict has defied resolution despite several mechanisms that have been used. These mechanisms include mediation, negotiation, arbitration, and litigation, infused with the cultural practices on other occasions. Despite some studies supporting the call that culture must be a key ingredient in the mechanisms designed to achieve peace between the conflicting parties, this call has still not received the requisite attention. Theoretically, the conflict transformation theory is also well positioned to aid the achievement of peace between disputants but the call by Lederach (1995; 2003) for the inclusion of culture in transforming protracted conflicts has not been given much attention. Importantly, the mechanisms being used are largely informed by conflict resolution instead of conflict transformation considering that transformation gives room for the use of culture and cultural practices in addressing protracted conflicts (Richmond, 2010; 2018). The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict provides an example per the guiding principle of the unsuccessful use of some level of cultural or indigenous mechanisms in conflict resolution.

In January 2019, clashes between the two sides resulted in the death of two people (Agyei et al., 2023). The government of Ghana therefore took over the piece of land that has been the contention between the Alavanyo and Nkonya. This has, however, not brought the situation to an end. In 2003 and 2017, the government took the piece of land to turn it into a forest reserve but

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the implementation failed. Though the parties may not get access to the land directly and the violent killings may have subsided, both sides suspect each other of accessing the land with the support of the security officers. Also, the livelihoods of the people have been curtailed as many of them are farmers who depended on the land to cultivate crops for food, fell and sawn timber and others also hunted for animals to sell. This resulted in hardships to members of both communities which is a recipe for the escalation of the conflict. Members of both groups now battle the security officers stationed there suspecting that the land was being used for cultivating Indian hemp. The government decided to build a military base on the contested piece of land for training security officers, which has since initiated some level of transformation of the conflictual relationship. As of now, not much has been done by the stakeholders, such as the government, to address the underlying issues triggering the violent destructive conflict. It has been left unattended to which confirms the issue of quick fixes. Is the government takeover of the contested land a good solution that can result in an effective transformation of the conflict?

Although literature exists on the effective application of traditional or indigenous mechanisms to conflict resolution, management and peacebuilding (see Asmamaw, 2014; Ateng et al, 2018; Auvinen, & Kivimäki, 2001; Bell, 2002; Ibrahim, 2018; Kenaw, n.d.; Kieh Jr., 2010; Lederach, 1995), not much exists on conflict transformation and how these have ended some communal, civil and ethnopolitical national-level conflicts. The use of conflict transformation mechanisms that the people can identify with, that introduced the use of their language, values and the people trusted those who led the process. That suggests that when violent relationships are transformed via

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cultural adherences such as beliefs, music, values, dance, language, festivals and art forms into the measures, peace can be restored (Bamidele, 2014; Ibrahim, 2018; Ramsbotham et al, 2017).

Also, few studies have been conducted on the conflict transformation approach and the role of culture (see Asmamaw, 2014; Gariba, 2023; Kenaw, n.d.). Notwithstanding the calls for culture to be mainstreamed into conflict transformation, it is not receiving much acceptance and applicability from practitioners and academics. Although differences in values and beliefs and other traditions have been identified as reasons for protracted conflicts (see Ateng et al., 2018; Avruch, 2006; Bukari, 2013; Osei-Kufuor & Bukari, 2022), this study is premised on the fact that a careful analysis of these differences and their linkages to conflicts are thoroughly reformed and harnessed well, they can become good tools for effective conflict transformation (Ibrahim, 2018; Mavalla & Osah, 2017; Miall, 2004; Sadar, 2008). This can be in the form of art (paintings and sculptures), belief in the gods and ancestors, festivals, language, libation pouring, music and dance, and values among other traditional adherences that have been passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, the relevance of this research.

While other studies (see Anumel et al, 2021; Gariba, 2017; Kendie et al, 2014; Midodzi & Imoro, 2011; Tsikata & Seini 2004) have been conducted on the 100-year violent conflict between the Alavanyo and Nkonya, they focused more on the causes, effects, history of the conflict, the management and resolution attempts. Attention was not given to deep-rooted reasons for the protractedness such as to identity and cultural issues including beliefs, values and traditions in the resolution processes, the over-reliance on mostly Western

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conflict resolution mechanisms embedded in the liberal and republican peace approaches in the interventions adopted. Other reasons include the neglect of the cultural beliefs, values or traditions of the disputing parties in the resolution process and, marginalisation of groups based on their identity. Evidence from Rwanda, South Africa and also Dagbon, Ghana suggests that when the cultural practices, values and beliefs of the parties are invoked, transformation may be achieved. Therefore, there is a need for the inclusion and use of the cultures of the parties to transform PSCs.

Also, many conflicts today have different dynamics that call for mechanisms that are context-based (Bukari, 2013; Anumel et al, 2021). They are internal, non-conversational and culture-sensitive (Boege, 2006). According to Bukari, many of these 'new wars' need intervention mechanisms that are culturally context-based and which relate to the environment of occurrence. This study also wants to add to calls to change the present Western-dominated "one size fits all" liberal and republican conflict resolution measures that have not been successful in the African or Ghanaian case as noted by the indigenous theory (Absolon, 2010; Abu-Nimar, 2003; Kaldor, 2013).

Gaps do exist between the application of culture to conflict transformation and culture and its importance to the search for peace, the successes of the approach and the limited use of the conflict transformation approach to institute lasting peace (Botes, 2003; Mavalla & Osah, 2017; Rhodes, 2008). Though they are gaining some attention, they are not receiving the needed impetus and application from academics and practitioners. The recognition of culture in conflict transformation mechanisms is key to ending the violence that has characterised the conflict and culminated in assertions that there are no

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differences between conflict transformation and conflict resolution. This study aims to fill the knowledge gap in the theories and mechanisms by adding to the call for the adoption of conflict transformation in the search for durable peace among conflicting parties.

Empirically, there are gaps between the evidence of success and the use of culture and conflict transformation by practitioners. Even though literature exists on the effective application of traditional or indigenous mechanisms to conflict resolution and management, not much exists on culturally-induced conflict transformation where the culture or cultural practices have been used to restructure relationships between groups involved in a culturally-induced conflict. Conflict transformation approaches have been successful in ending communal, civil and national conflicts because the people easily identify with the methods, language, values and third parties who facilitated the process (Ibrahim, 2018; Kieh Jr., 2010).

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to explore the role of culture in transforming the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict.

Specifically, the research aims to:

1. Describe the current state of the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict;

2. Examine the various mechanisms that have been used to resolve the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict;

3. Analyse the cultural practices in the mechanisms used in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict;

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4. Assess the potential of cultural practices to restructure the relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people.

Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the current state of the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict?

2. What mechanisms were used to resolve the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted conflict?

3. Which cultural practices were included in the mechanisms used in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict?

4. How can cultural strategies be used to restructure the relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya?

Significance of the Study

The government of Ghana commits so much of its financial resources to peacebuilding activities in conflict prone areas of the country. Conflicts, especially the violent protracted types such as the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict, retard development as they culminate in the destruction of properties and the loss of human resource as the parties kill members of the opposing groups. It is therefore imperative on the state to find amicable and lasting peace between combatants involved in such intra-state communal level protracted conflicts to prevent the committal of huge amounts of limited state resources to managing the conflict to other developmental projects.

The study hopes to contribute to knowledge and policy direction on how to transform recurring conflicts and help achieve durable peace in conflict-prone societies. It will go a long way to complement efforts being made to

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achieve UN sustainable goal 16 which aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". Target 1 of this goal aims to significantly reduce all forms of violence and its related death rates everywhere. This study therefore contributes to the body of knowledge and literature on transformation of protracted social conflicts.

Also, the African Union adopted "Silencing the Guns" as its agenda for the year 2020 which aims to remove all the forgotten wars and conflicts on the continent. This is to make the continent peaceful so the people of Africa can go about their daily lives in utmost peace. This research by its findings will also help achieve this goal of making the guns go silent by making the findings available to peace practitioners such as WANEP and the NPC-Ghana and to make a case for the adoption and implementation of a local conflict transformation mechanism culturally-informed to end the violent protracted conflicts that are dotted all over the continent. This will in turn result in removing all conflicts on the continent and making these aims of the AU and the targets and goals of the UN come to fruition.

Scope of the Study

The study targeted the people and, local leaders such as chiefs and Assembly persons of the Alavanyo Kpeme and Nkonya Tayi settlements within the communities or ethnicities two towns. It did not concentrate on the other settlements within the two groups as the epic centre of the conflict is these two settlements who bother the disputed land.

Second, the research focused on Hohoe, since it bothers the Alavanyo-Nkonya communities although the conflict has repercussions for those towns as

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they experience the flow of displaced citizens of Alavanyo and Nkonya when the conflict escalates.

Third, the study focused on the importance of some cultural adherences such as language, beliefs, values, festivals, arts, inheritance and inter-marriages among others to transforming the violent protracted social conflict that has plagued the area for a century.

Lastly, the study focused on the issues of culture (such as language, beliefs, values, festivals, arts, inheritance and inter-marriages) and conflict transformation as used in the field of peace and conflict studies.

Organisation of the Study

The study is organised as follows: Chapter One sets the background issues and the context for the study. In the ensuing chapters, Chapter Two, the literature that was reviewed for the study was addressed to set the theoretical and conceptual grounds for the study. The various methods adopted and how they were applied in this study are also discussed in Chapter Three. In the fourth chapter, issues regarding the current state of the conflict between the Alavanyo and Nkonya are examined while looking at some historical antecedents between both groups. Chapter Five also examines cultural practices that have been adopted and used in the past to resolve the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict.

Chapter Six also concentrates on the cultural practices included in the mechanisms that have been used in attempts to resolve the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. Chapter Seven also assessed the potential of cultural strategies to restructure the relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people. Finally, Chapter Eight also summarises the study, concludes and makes recommendations for policy and future research.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter deals with a review of related literature on the theories and concepts that underpin the study. The first section paid attention to the theories underlying the study. Theories, such as protracted social conflict by Azar (1978; 1990) were looked at to address the protractedness of the conflict under study. Indigenous wholistic theory also dealt with the missing role of culture in many of the mechanisms used so far, the cultural sustainability theory focused on the need to continually revitalise and reaffirm the importance of culture and conflict transformation theory was reviewed and used to deal with the need for the transformation of the conflict. The second section deals with concepts such as protracted social conflicts, culture, indigenous wholism, conflict transformation and cultural sustainability and the linkages between them are established based on the theories. The third section presents a review of empirical studies conducted on culture and its links to conflict transformation globally. The fourth part centred on a conceptual framework for the study and the final section sheds light on the theoretical issues underpinning the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya ethnic cum resource conflict.

Theoretical Review

In this section, the theories that form the foundation for this study are discussed. These are protracted social conflict theory, indigenous wholistic theory, cultural sustainability theory and the conflict transformation theory. The combination of these theories became necessary, as each one of them is insufficient in completely justifying the phenomena under study and therefore

the need for the others to complement them in explaining the study. The author draws on the strengths of the theories and where the theories falter, the other theories are used to complement the shortfalls and further discussed to ground this study but mentions and addresses their shortfalls as well.

Protracted conflict theory (PSC) was used in this study to deal with the first objective which examines the current state of the conflict and the underlying issues including identity formation of both ethnicities and the issues that have made the conflict prolonged. The indigenous wholistic theory (IWT) is rooted in indigenous knowledge and perspectives, emphasising the interconnectedness of all living things and seeking to address the holistic needs of individuals and communities, including spiritual, emotional, physical, social and mental well-being. Since conflicts emanate from cultural differences, there is need for the same culture, rooted in indigenous wholistic theory is a key component of conflict transformation efforts to resolve protracted conflicts. This theory will form the basis for exploring the second and third objectives.

Conflict transformation theory (CTT), however, view conflicts as opportunities for growth and transformation the PSC theory believes conflicts are normal and engender progress and focuses more on restructuring the underlying structural and relational issues driving conflicts. This will address objective four of the study. However, the CTT does not address the sustenance and revitalisation of the cultures and traditions of the local people to prevent the recurrence of conflicts through interculturality. This is where cultural sustainability theory (CST) comes in where emphasis is placed on preserving and promoting cultural diversity and heritage. It recognises that cultural sustainability is essential for the well-being of individuals, communities, and

societies as a whole. This theory will be used in analysing objectives one, two and four. Azar's (1990) PSC theory is discussed in the next section.

Protracted Social Conflict Theory

The seminal work of Azar and his collaborators (1978, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1988, 1990) has provided a theoretical foundation which many scholars of protracted social conflict have built on. Azar studied conflicts in many multi-ethnic nations and societies that have become protracted, mostly due to the structure of these societies and the shared histories between the constituent parts. The theory presents four necessary components of PSC. These are effective participation, security, distinctive identity, and social recognition of identity (Azar 1985).

The PSC theory states that protracted conflicts are often formed and can be traced to the history of the parties, the denial of basic human needs of access, identity and security contestations, the role of the state, international political and economic linkages (colonial factor) and involvement of the military in politics (Azar, 1990). Furthermore, to Azar, initial conditions (colonial legacy, domestic historical setting, and the multi-communal nature of the society) must be present and combine to play roles that shape the genesis of protracted social conflicts. When the needs of individuals or groups are denied, they resort to arms to take their fair share of the resources which they believe, are their entitlement. PSCs exhibit certain features that set them apart in their manifestation in phases and these are genesis, process dynamics & outcome analysis. These features help with analysing the conflict.

To Azar (1990), the genesis stage is the formative stage where issues that are non-conflictual become conflictual, set the disputants against each other and

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can result in conflict. The first feature at the genesis stage is the composition of the society or communal content. The 'multi-communal' composition then weaves into histories such as colonialism or historical rivalries between the parties and leading one group to dominate the other. The second feature or issue at the genesis stage focuses on human needs, the primary ontological need of the community to ensure their physical survival and well-being. Depriving people of accessing basic needs which others have access can produce PSCs. Every group, especially minority groups, must be allowed to access their needs and institutions in their societies and which is common to all the communal groups (Beaudoin, 2013).

Third, the role of the state or government also counts at the genesis stage. The state must ensure that all communal groups under its jurisdiction can meet their basic human needs and participate freely in the system. The theory postulates that, if the state and/or communal groups choose violence as the means of achieving their goals, the conflict can become destructive and protracted and may result in unequal development, weakened governance structures and militarised politics. This further exacerbates the denial of certain groups from accessing basic needs which then culminates in a protracted cycle of collapsing societal structures or institutions and increasing violent destructive conflict (Ramsbotham, 2005). International linkage is the last issue at the genesis stage where the extent to which internal policy can result in the intractability of the conflict. This comes in two folds; economic dependence, where the state in question takes direction from donors on what to do creating a donor-client relationship due to the loyalty the security services hold towards government officials and politicians instead of the state and citizens.

The second stage after genesis is process dynamics which is also in two phases, communal actions and strategies and built-in mechanisms for conflicts. State actions and strategies refer to the potential of various 'triggers' which activate latent conflict and make them escalate into more violent conflict. These can be trivial issues such as an insult of a group member with ties which the group interprets as an affront to the group and mobilises to restore their respect and identity via violent means (Azar, 1990). State reactions such as violent responses to minority upheavals or minority grievances matter here too. If the response is not appropriate, it can also lead to more violence and conflict becomes protracted (Ramsbotham, 2005). The second is built-in mechanisms for handling conflict. Here, consideration is given to how long-term conflicts against groups affect perceptions of the other and how this, can impact the behaviour of belligerent groups within the state (Beaudoin, 2013).

The third and final stage of the development of protracted social conflicts is Outcomes Analysis. Here, the outcome of the conflict is assessed as PSCs produce negative-sum results as there is no clear winner. Azar (1990) points out four possible consequences of PSC: deterioration of physical security, institutional deformity, psychological ossification and increased dependency and cliency. Regarding the deterioration of physical security, the theory notes that protracted conflicts leave society and citizens in insecurity as some are physically battered and maimed, some are killed and property and infrastructure are threatened. Second, is institutional deformity, where institutions of the state are rendered non-functional due to protracted conflict. Third is psychological ossification where there is increased conformity to negative constructs and mistrust. Lastly, there is increased dependency & cliency of the society or

community on leaders and international donors due to the weakened economy resulting from long periods of violence.

Protracted communal or intra-state conflicts have features which set them apart from the myriad of conflicts dotted around the globe. According to Dudouet (2006), these intra-state conflicts exhibit the following characteristics: 1) take place in civilian communities and can expand to engulf whole societies, within the brief of violence; 2) begin and generally occur within a mix of ideological, political or resource issues coupled with communal and ethnic identity issues referred to as "ethnopolitical" conflicts; 3) these conflicts tend to have high levels of protractedness which span several generations while exhibiting different levels of intensity and; 4) there are asymmetries or imbalances of power between the parties. These imbalances, Dudouet adds, can affect the processes of transformation.

To add to the above, many experts opine that power imbalances between conflicting parties play a role in conflicts becoming protracted (see Dahrendorf, 1990; Dudouet, 2006; 2008; Lederach, 2014; Maiese, 2004; Miall, 2004). Miall (2004) notes that a close examination of most contemporary violent conflicts, suggests: 1) asymmetric power or unequal status exists between the parties; 2) the conflicts are protracted, repeated violence gets out of control and the violence does not follow the normal phases conflicts travel; 3) the conflicts engulf the societies and affect the regions where they happen and result in complex emergencies where people are displaced, others are killed, and survivors suffer debilitating health conditions and human rights abuses.

The criteria by Miall (2004) above are shared by many experts and academics (See Debrah, Alidu, & Owusu-Mensah, 2016; Galtung, 1996;

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Horowitz & Klaus, 2018; Lederach, 1997; 2003; Maiese, 2004; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). By those shared characteristics, I can conclude that protracted intra-state conflicts are conflicts that take place within civilian groups, are complex in nature, have more than one cause coupled with identity issues and unequal power among the parties involved in the conflict, and oftentimes, span over decades. These issues enumerated can threaten the cessation of violence and end these conflicts. Thus, the need for conflict transformation is considered (Azar & Farah, 1984) to be context-specific.

However, according to Miall (2004), the theory maintains that states can resort to patterns of constructive conflict when they promote informed decision-making capacity and civil politics that is geared towards meeting the basic needs of all groups can result if the government has enough will and capacity to meet the needs of the constituent groups. The PSC theory maintains that the military should not meddle in politics, where there is international support and goodwill, the state's ability to accommodate dissenting views and encourage cooperation among constituent groups, and allow communal groups to choose improved ways of solving tensions or conflict. Though the theory can transform conflicts, although transformation was not explicitly mentioned. Thus, Azar (1990) contributed to conflict transformation by suggesting a reversal of the factors that support the escalation and sustenance of conflicts. These must be addressed to make the destructive conflict constructive, through changes in norms and structures that promote peaceful co-existence of the groups (Miall, 2004).

The PSC theory has been critiqued. The economic theory of conflict by Collier (1999) and Collier & Hoeffler (2002; 2004) which also discuss the protractedness of conflicts disagrees with Azar's assertion that the deprivation

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based on identity lines results in PSCs. They instead point to resource inadequacy, greed, unequal access to human needs and the tendency for some people to want more resources and tend to loot more of these resources. This situation creates shortages and leads to the deprivation of others of access to resources. This is the major reason why conflicts become protracted (see Burton, 1990; 1997; Collier, 1999; 2003; Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; 2002; 2004; Gurr, 1970). Collier and Hoeffler (2002), state that it is man's greed to have a bigger share of limited basic needs of survival that has resulted in making these conflicts protracted and not grievances and identity noted by Azar. However, this study identifies with both ideas of grievances based on different identities and the basic need for resources since both issues are present in the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict one of the oldest intra-state conflicts in Ghana.

The PSC theory addresses the changes that have taken place due to the protractedness of conflicts and how they can be addressed to restore peaceful coexistence between disputing parties and also to ensure durable peace. Factors such as the identity of the parties which is mostly ethnic during and after the Cold War era, basic human needs such as recognition, equal participation, the role of the state, the communal nature of the society, and the colonial past among other reasons are some reasons enumerated to be at the base of protracted conflicts. Although, the theory does not directly mention the transformation of conflict but brings to the fore the need for transformation which directly aims at restructuring the attitudes, behaviours, contexts and structures of the parties while relying on the resources in the communities or societies involved in the cycle of violence. I now turn my attention to the indigenous wholistic theory which places cures for societal ills from indigenous and local remedies which

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the PSC theory does not address and thus the need for the indigenous wholistic theory. This conflict is local and indigenous to the Alavanyo and Nkonya and therefore requires indigenous remedies to deal with it.

Indigenous Wholistic Theory

The indigenous wholistic theory emerged in the 1990s as a response to the failures of mainstream liberal and neoliberal thought which are deeply rooted in Western ideologies and culture. It started in the medical field as a response to promoting indigenous knowledge regarding local responses to ailments. The indigenous wholistic theory by Absolon (2010; 2019) uses the medicine wheel, four directions, and circles as effective means and tools for developing healing strategies in traditional settings (Marsden, 2005). It offers a multi-level strategy that is circular in nature and has been practised for thousands of years by lineages (Absolon, 1993; 2010).

At all these levels are people (infants, youth, young adults, adults, and elders). Each level or state is affected by historical, social, political and economic factors as each layer has a spiritual, emotional, mental and physical element to it. Indigenous wholism considers the connections among constituent parts and thrives on the notion that we are all related. This starts to make sense as we perceive each part concerning the whole (Poonwassie & Charter, 2005). The dynamics of our realities are created because of the relationships and experiences of these interrelationships and interconnections with others and our environment. Absolon (2010) used the Medicine Wheel (Figure 1) to illustrate the indigenous wholistic theory

The wheel helps humans to understand their realities and experiences considering influences from the elements that result in individual and collective

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beings. The experiences of indigenous people can be best appreciated using such a holistic framework. The illustration above depicts how the experiences of indigenous people are constructed and contextualised within historical, social, political and economic frameworks. According to Abosolon (2010; 2019) buttressed by Kanu (2019), the framework provided by the theory is wholistic as suggests ways for understanding the balance between nature and harmony. The theory further notes the factors that help to achieve peace and balance within the system. Phenomena and experiences such as colonization and wars that took place in history and associated mechanisms such as land dispossession contributed to the individual or personal and group imbalances in many facets of social life in many societies (Graveline, 2004).

Some negative events, such as the disconnection from the land of indigenous people which results from their forced dispossession, created imbalances and conflicts among the people who were connected to the earth before and who derive a lot of meaning by interacting with the earth (Absolon, 1993; 2010). Slavery, colonialism and associated experiences contribute to internal violence and lateral oppression. Since this study is interested in understanding local or indigenous people to serve some traditional/cultural demands in the quest to transform violent protracted conflicts, the indigenous wholistic theory forms the fulcrum around which the transformation agenda can revolve. According to the theory, the indigenous people can only be well understood through the historical, social, political, and economic facets. While each level is affected by spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical factors, the connections that make groups or communities stable are the important issues that the theory places much premium on. The medicine wheel illustrates the

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theoretical underpinnings using the four directions and the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical elements. Within each element are some specific theoretical factors that warrant consideration in indigenous-based practice.
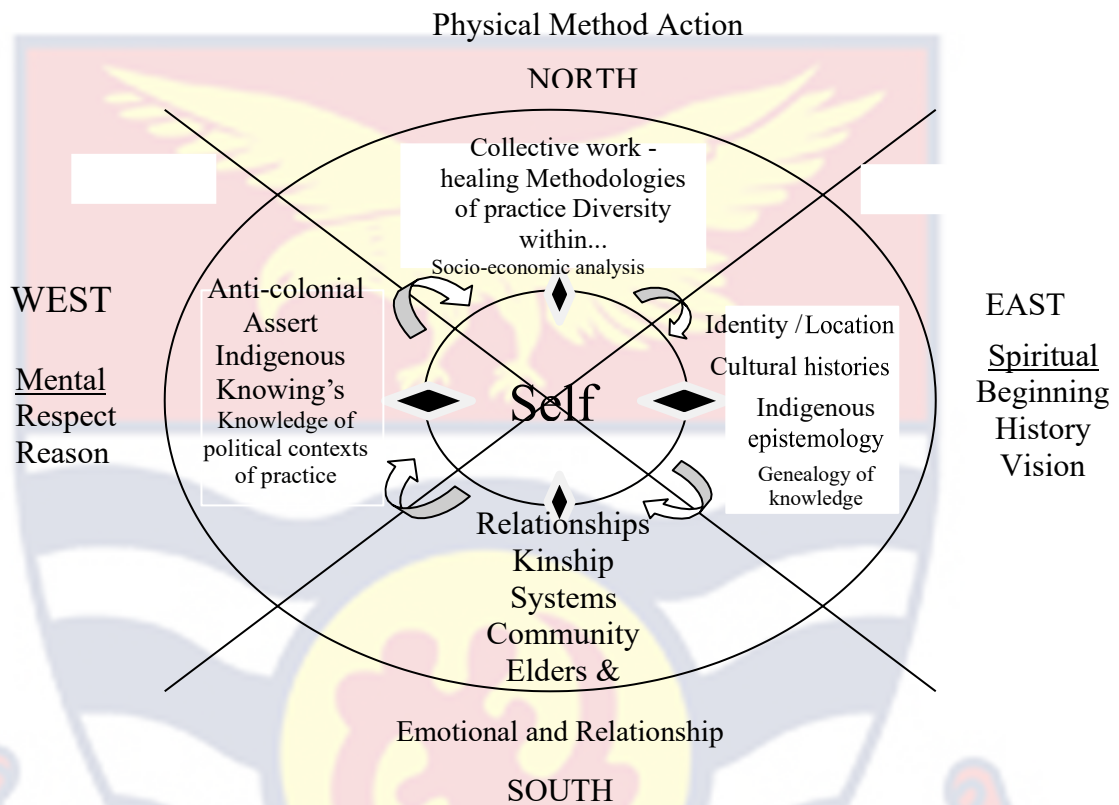
Figure 1: Indigenous Wholistic Theory

Source: Absolon (2010)

The diagram begins from the eastern doorway and continues to the directions to the south, west and north doorways. These directions interrelate, interconnect and interdepend on each other. Thus, changes that occur in any sphere affect the whole. It is important to note that the arrows in the diagram illustrate the interrelationships and interdependence between all the parts. The Eastern doorway teaches visioning, beginning and rebirth (Absolon, 2019). Beginning acknowledges that indigenous people are re-emerging and in need of constant reinvigoration which will propel recovery, and re-emergence and aid

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the reclaiming of their knowledge base. The aspects of indigenous wholism that emerge through the eastern doorway are spirit, identity, and history. Interestingly, McCormick (2005) notes that consideration must be given to spirituality in healing processes and practices as spiritual knowledge embodies the awareness and understanding of aboriginal epistemology and a resulting consciousness of respecting the sacred world by indigenous peoples. McCormick added that a key feature of this doorway is that indigenous people have a cultural history that has worked for them and predates colonization.

Here, it can be argued that indigenous conflict transformation, management and peacebuilding approaches should be factored into the peace efforts in Nkonya-Alavanyo because the conflict, although seems a mere land tussle in the natural or physical sense, has deep connections to their heritage, history, identity, traditions, customs and practices as depicted in the African cosmovision regarding the universe. Here, the universe is seen in spiritual, natural and human spheres where land and spirituality are woven into existence where one requires the other to exist as depicted by *Ubuntu*. Ubuntu, a South African philosophy, also found in most African societies, stipulates the need for the other to exist for one to exist, thus, emphasising brotherliness. Land issues especially in Africa are traditional, customary and sometimes spiritual in many communities in Ghana. These cannot be dissociated from the attempts to resolve the conflict. A transformation effort or approach that fails to recognise how the land struggle and the customs and traditions of the people are interwoven with the spiritual is bound to fail and thus lead to the protractedness of the conflict.

The Southern doorway is concerned with the people's emotional and relational aspects. As can be inferred from Figure 1, the Southern doorway

teaches about relationships, people, life, and growth. Through the Southern doorway, theoretical elements regarding the emotional sides of the whole where relationships and social contexts are understood and made clear. This doorway stresses the existence and understanding of diverse relationships, and kinship systems that go beyond genetic connections. It espouses the integration of these relationships and emphasises collaboration with the community to foster healing relationships, adopt and use methods that support cultivating healthy relationships and contextualise issues within a socio-political analysis of social problems facing indigenous people (Absolon, 2019; 2010).

The Western doorway brings forth teachings of the ancestors, the mind, and respect. It iterates respect for knowledge and knowledge of creation and calls for mental strength and reason. This doorway specifically recognises ancestors, ancestral knowledge, and power, and develops critiques of the mechanisms of colonialism as it engages in critical literacy and critical education with indigenous communities. It is anti-colonial in practice and works to counter colonial ideologies.

The Northern doorway also teaches healing, doing and movement. In this sphere, physical elements are acknowledged while physical actions and movements are situated. When the three other directions are working, the teachings of the northern doorway are operationalised and consciousness of the other doorways where actions consciously occur. This doorway specifically recognises the healing inherent in being and doing, acknowledges collective work, and addresses methodologies for practice from instituted indigenous frameworks such as teaching circles, ceremonies, the use of nature and process-oriented action, and healing as a strategy for the restoration of balance. It also

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encourages a socio-economic analysis of current development issues.

At the centre of the wheel is fire, and here is the venue for all the actions. It is the point where all four doorways meet and interrelate. It is where balance and harmony take their source from and it exists when all aspects are harmoniously balanced. The fire could also represent the self, and how it relates to all others (Absolon, 2010). Utilizing a holistic framework for the analysis of indigenous issues enables practitioners to understand people better in their context as the centre represents the cumulative aspects of all four doorways.

The theory has been criticised for having many elements which makes its representation not exhaustive. Also, circle teachings are diverse and such representations can be seen differently applied depending on the context, people, teacher, and society. Additionally, indigeneity risks overlap with the category of indigenousness, which serves as the basis for many contested political claims and economic cleavages (Cutolo, 2008).

PSC theory explains the protractedness of the conflict but is unable to discuss the importance of culture and cultural practices for the transformation of the conflict. The shortfall in this theory to place emphasis on the indigenous knowledge and practices for the transformation led to the adoption of the indigenous wholistic theory. Indigenous wholistic theory was used to explain the lack of culture and cultural practices in the resolution measures and how this have impacted the realisation of the durable peace that they aim to achieve. But due to the failure of conflict resolution to consider the indigenous practices due to its Western nature, conflict transformation theory was considered and used. Conflict transformation theory was used due to the need for inclusion of culture and cultural practices of the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups. Conflict

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transformation theory makes room for the inclusion of the culture and identities of the groups involved in a conflict situation. The focus will be shifted to conflict transformation in the next section.

Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict transformation appeared in the peace and conflict studies literature in the 1960s and early 1970s. It is relatively a new approach in the discipline compared to conflict resolution or conflict management. It resulted from the view that conflict is a natural, inevitable, and normal aspect of life and society (Austin et al., 2011; 2016 Goetschel, 2009), therefore, cannot be eradicated as desired by conflict resolution approaches, but instead, the violent aspect should be transformed into peaceful ones. The emphasis here must rather be on strategies that will make these conflicts non-destructive. Thus, conflict transformation emphasises the transformation of the negative and destructive conflicts and turning them into positive and constructive conflicts (Lederach, 1995; 1998; 2003; Miall, 2004) as conflicts are always in a state of flux and thus it is not always possible to resolve them and thus, can only be transformed. To the theorists, conflicts engender new norms and order in society and do not always produce negative outcomes (Coser, 1956; 2019).

The conflict transformation theory has become increasingly popular in academic circles over the past 20-30 years mostly due to the inability of the conflict management and conflict resolution approaches to settle many contemporary protracted, intra-state conflicts as they fail to appreciate the deep-rooted fundamental issues in the conflict (Austin et al., 2011; 2016; Botes, 2003; Hugh et al., 2004; Rhodes, 2008). However, its use has been low among practitioners. Although the term, conflict transformation, was coined in the

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1980s by John Paul Lederach, some earlier writers such as Curle (1971), Galtung (1969) and Azar (1978; 1981; 1990; 1991) have suggested the idea of restructuring violent destructive attitudes and behaviours of the disputing parties into peaceful ones in their works and these restructuring must include structures which contribute to conflicts (Dudouet, 2006; Miall, 2004).

Lederach's (2014; 2003; 1997; 1998; 1995) works are considered by practitioners and experts as one of the most comprehensive writings on conflict transformation in which he considered conflict transformation as the panacea for restructuring protracted conflicts into peace. Lederach took inspiration from the quest by humans to achieve values such as peace and justice. Justice was central to his definition of peace as he noted that justice leads to peace. The key areas in which conflict transformation must concentrate are reforming the personal, relational, structural, and cultural changes that were experienced during the short, medium or long periods of conflict (Dudouet, 2006; Lederach 2003; Miall, 2004). The emphasis should be on transforming the attitudes and behaviours of conflicting parties aimed at repairing strained relationships resulting from protracted conflicts that are embedded in the structures of society (Galtung, 1996).

John Paul Lederach, the pioneer and protagonist of the field of conflict transformation positions conflict transformation as an alternative to conflict resolution which he notes, has failed to achieve the goals it set out to achieve, which is resolving or ending conflicts in society.

The highlight of the theory is the big picture of conflict transformation (see Figure 2).

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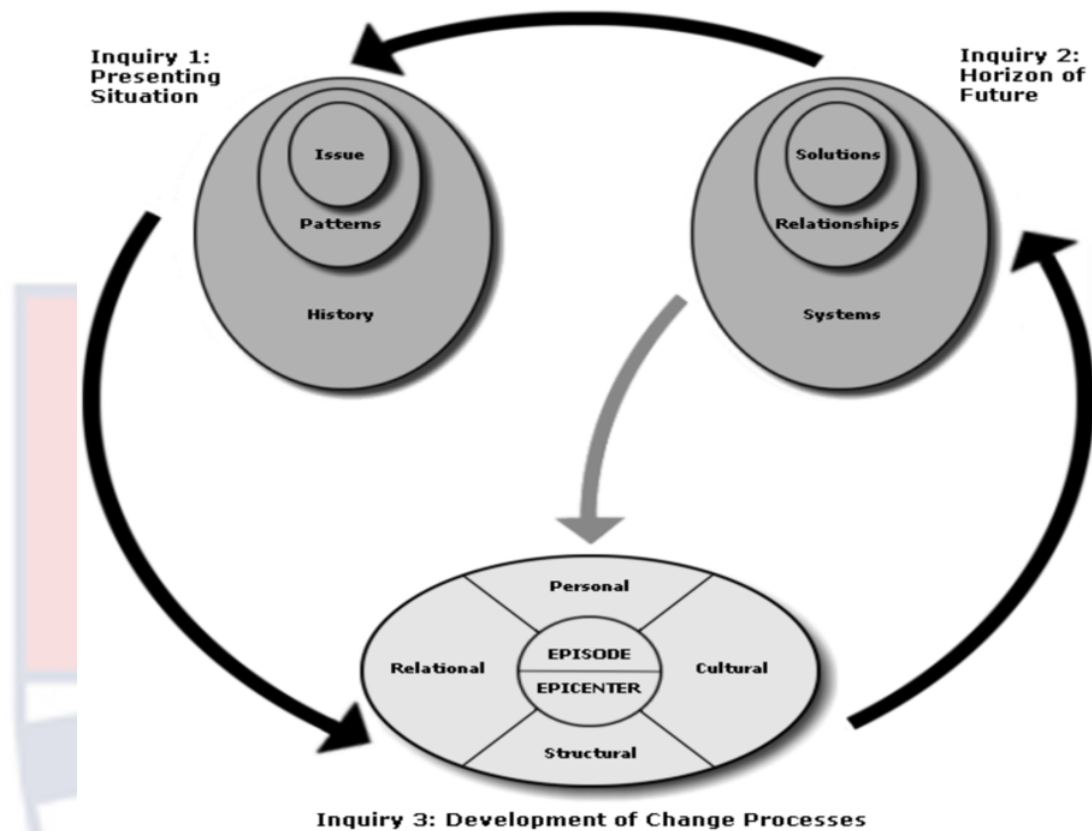
Figure 2: **The Big Picture of Conflict Transformation**

Source: Lederach (2003, p. 35)

Lederach (2003) uses Figure 2 to map any conflict where the conflict is divided into three levels known as inquiries; 1) the presenting situation, 2) the horizon of the future and, 3) the development of change processes. Taking the direction of the arrows (anti-clockwise), first, the Presenting Situation is where one deciphers ways to understand the conflict by considering moving beyond the surface issues to deeper level issues such as the history or development of the conflict, the dynamics and patterns of relationships that have developed over time, especially in the course of the conflict. This will help know the issues underpinning the conflict, how they have changed over time and design ways to address them.

Next, the Development of Change Processes where Lederach (2003) deals with the type of change that is envisaged, what are needed and how the changed system should look and address the destructive changes caused by the conflict and adopt constructive ways to achieve the needed change. According to Lederach, the approach does not move straight to address the solutions straight from issues as in the case of conflict resolution, until in the third sphere (even though that sphere is labelled 2) and this is due to complexities that have to be dealt with in the change processes. The change targets personal, relational, structural and cultural changes needed to restructure the whole society and not just the people. There is the need to decide the change that parties need and what the new constructive system should be before proceeding.

Third is Horizon of the Future, where Lederach addresses three issues, thus, solutions, relationships and systems. After the change processes have been designed, one can proceed to provide solutions, that will enhance the flow of cordial relationships and activate a system that impacts the people, structures and society and leads to improvements in the life of the parties in these conflict-prone societies. The light arrow in the middle from Inquiry 2 to Inquiry 3, also suggests a continuous interaction and activities between the two inquiries enable a holistic transformation of the issues. The cycling back interaction between the Horizon for the future and the development of the Change process will finally impact the present situation by leading to a reduction in the destructive components of the conflict. The diagram shows the relationship between people, history, relationships that change over time and how these interact to produce new norms in constructive ways.

As intimated earlier, due to the changes produced by conflict, there is the need to change some things leading to a peaceful society with parties collaborating on many levels. The approach or perspective thrives on the fact that conflicts emanate from needs such as food, and resources such as land, identity, power and legitimacy (Lederach, 2003). The conflict transformation approach adds that the change experts must be on two main issues as they set out to achieve the needed transformation. First, what are the changes that are occurring or have occurred in the conflict process and second, what kinds of changes need to be achieved during and after the transformation process? Those should be the guideposts for local leaders and their people, CSOs, among others, during the transformation process (Lederach, 2014). The approach suggests transformation that can be analysed in four broad areas: the *personal*, the *relational*, the *structural*, and the *cultural* according to Lederach. Since changes occur in these four spheres of society, the transformation must also focus on these facets of society.

At the personal level, it is noted that conflicts negatively affect the cognitive, emotional, perceptual and spiritual aspects of the individual. These can be on the psychology of the person (Appiah-Boateng & Kendie, 2022; Miall, 2004). As a result, these issues need to be worked on consciously to make the human person well again. The transformation should aim to reduce the destructive effects of social conflicts on the self-esteem and entire well-being of the individual (Dudouet, 2006; 2008; Tikka, 2019). In the process of conflict transformation, deliberate measures must be instituted to eschew the recurrence of these social conflicts to help increase the security of the person and help them to realise their full potential. The safety and well-being of the individual must

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be paramount. The individual must also be consulted and involved in the process (Lederach & Maiese, 2003; Lederach, 2014).

At the relational level, individuals and groups in conflict have hitherto, had very good relationships between them before the conflict. At the relational level, conflicts do affect the cordial relationships that existed between the conflicting parties before the crisis point of the conflict. Power, communication processes, levels of interdependence and general interactions between the parties is gravely affected by conflict (Curle, 1971; Dudouet, 2004; 2006; Lederach, 1995; 2003). As a result, it takes great effort by the parties to even initiate a simple conversation or dialogue (Goetschel, 2009; Lederach, 1997; 2003). There is a general atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust between the parties due to the history of violence. There must be conscious attempts made during the transformation process to minimise the inhibitions to communication, bolster channels of interaction and understanding to manage fears, experiences, hopes and aspirations of the parties to the conflict and increase the opportunities for dialogue and engagement aimed at improving relations. These changes are enablers for dialogue and set the grounds for the effective transformation of violent attitudes and behaviours as noted by Galtung (1996) in his attitudes, behaviours and context triangle.

At the structural level, it is believed that conflicts negatively affect the very base of society. These are the issues underlying the conflict and which are rooted in economic, political and social structures or institutions of the society and rooted in unbalanced resources needed to meet basic needs for the smooth functioning of the society (Goetschel, 2009; Lederach, 2003). This impedes their performance and if the structures are unable to perform their functions, the

people and the society suffer. The transformation process is supposed to carefully analyse the prevailing conditions within the structures which gave rise to the conflict and provide ways in which the conflict has affected these institutions and increased their planning and decision-making processes (Maisie, 2007; Miall, 2004). The transformation needs to promote non-violent modes which lead to a reduction of violent interactions and advocate for peaceful interactions and cooperation between the parties resulting in the elimination of destructive violence. Attempts must be made to make the structures promote individual and group access to resources to meet basic needs and where all parties are involved in decisions that affect their lives (Goetschel, 2009; Osei-Kufuor & Bukari 2022; Rhodes, 2008).

At the cultural level, the conflict affects the "broadest patterns of group life, including identity, and the ways that culture affects patterns of response and conflict" (Lederach 2003, p. 26). In this aspect, the conflict transformation practitioners, local leaders and parties should understand the effects that a conflict can have on the culture of the groups involved to initiate an effective response to the conflict. It is therefore imperative to appreciate cultural patterns that activate conflicts or norms that impede durable peace and design mechanisms within the culture for a constructive response to conflicts if these patterns do not already exist in the cultures.

For the conflict transformation to be successful, it must go through these four steps according to Lederach (1997). The steps to transforming conflicts are as follows: 1) all groups or parties and other stakeholders that are affected by the conflict should be able to acknowledge that there is a problem and commit to ways to come together to deal with the conflict; 2) all the parties including

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peace workers should identify the root causes of the conflict, make it explicit to all concerned, and brought to the notice of all groups; 3) all the groups involved should be able to develop a common vision for what they can do with one accord and how they want to get it done and; 4) the groups should know what their needs are to sustain their ability to continue to work together to manage or eliminate the causes of the conflict and to promote peace. Thus, a transformational approach seeks to understand the particular episode of conflict not in isolation, but rather as embedded in the greater pattern of society and history (Goetschel, 2009).

Culture plays a significant role in conflict transformation. Conflict can arise due to cultural differences and misunderstandings, making it important to understand the different cultural values and beliefs that may be at play in any given situation. Culture plays a crucial role in conflict transformation. Culture refers to the beliefs, values, customs, and behaviours that are shared by a group of people. Differences in cultural backgrounds and the lack of appreciation of the cultures and the lack of understanding or respect for each other's differences can result in conflict. Cultural competency, or the ability to recognise, understand, and respect different cultural perspectives, is essential for conflict transformation. To effectively transform conflicts that arise from cultural differences, it is important to employ culturally appropriate methods and strategies. This may involve engaging with traditional practices and customs, building relationships with cultural leaders and community members, and creating spaces for open and respectful dialogue (Kagan, 2018; Lederach 1998; 2003; Austin et al., 2004; 2016; Hugh et al., 2004).

The indigenous wholistic theory also emphasises the interconnectedness of all things, including people, the environment, and spirituality (Absolon, 2010). This perspective considers the whole person, not just their thoughts and behaviours, and seeks to create balance and harmony in all aspects of human or social life. When applied to conflict transformation, the indigenous wholistic perspective can help to address the root causes of conflict, rather than just the surface-level symptoms (McCormick, 2005). Overall, indigenous wholistic theory and cultural competence are key components of conflict transformation, helping to create an inclusive and equitable society where individuals from diverse backgrounds can live in harmony with one another. Conflict transformation will ensure interculturality and a plural cultural society where all cultures are expressed.

Some earlier writers worked on the idea of conflict transformation although they did not mention conflict transformation directly in their work. Galtung's (1969; 1996) conception is that conflicts are embedded in, maintained and perpetuated by the structures in society and he notes that to reduce or eliminate conflicts, the structures must be reformed especially in situations of negative peace where segments of the society face deprivation, discrimination while the absence of which coupled with no structural and cultural violence, he notes as positive peace. Positive peace goes beyond ending direct violence to transforming structural and cultural issues and moving towards enhanced justice and equal access. Galtung (1969) held that, without restructuring violent perpetuating structures, there cannot be an end to conflicts. Galtung (1996) adds that conflicts stem from contradictions in the structure of the global societal structure which confirms Azar's (1990) international linkages as a factor

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resulting in causing and contributing to PSCs but PSC was mostly concerned with the transformation of issues and structures but not actor transformation.

Galtung's (1969) Attitudes, Behaviour and Context/Contradiction referred to as the ABC model is a framework for analysis. The framework which just indicated the attitudes, the behaviour of the parties and the context or environment of the parties to the conflict requires restructuring during or after conflicts. To Galtung, conflicts are normal to society to society and therefore cannot be ended completely. Galtung advocated that in all conflicts, there is the need to assess these three issues to enable the analyst to understand the conflict to effectively deal with it.

Curle's (1971) work built on Galtung's approach by tracing how asymmetric power relationships between groups can be transformed through a shift from unbalanced to balanced power relationships which can be achieved through a process of conscientisation, confrontation, negotiation and development. To Curle, conflict transformation is linked to development thinking and targets the strained relationship between the parties involved in a conflict and the alienation they experience and which is rooted in power asymmetries or imbalances between the parties. There is a need for the conflictual relationship to be restructured to help prevent a recurrence. Curle's power imbalance view is shared by Maiese (2004) and Dudouet (2007). This view is needed to assess the issues of control and the contest for it in my analysis of the protractedness and the transformation required which is missing in the conflict resolution and management approaches. Lederach (1998; 2003) also built on Curle's (1971) ideas, by expanding and developing them into an approach that meets internationally accepted standards and applications.

At this point, I discuss the conflict transformation approach and its linkage with the PSC theory. Azar's (1978; 1990) protracted social conflict theory is also considered a theory of conflict transformation although the theory does not explicitly mention conflict transformation (Miall, 2004; Goetschel, 2009). To experts, when Azar's PSCs theory is reversed, where the root causes and the underlying structural issues enumerated in the theory that is responsible for the conflict and its protractedness are addressed, conflict transformation can take place (Maill, 2004).

Azar's (1990) theory will be applied to protractedness aspects of the conflict and though it has been viewed in the light of transformation when reversed by addressing the issues underlying the conflict, it does not explicitly deal with the transformation as the conflict transformation approach goes about it. That is the strength the conflict transformation theory has that is important to this research while it also does not go deep into the issues that led to the protractedness in the first place. Therefore, a combination of both theories is key to understanding the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict and how it can be effectively handled using their cultural practices and traditions.

Conflict transformation has acquired meanings such as the transformation of individuals, transformation of relationships, and transformation of social systems, large and small (Wani, Suwirta & Fayeye, 2013). These are the concerns of the conflict transformation perspective. These confirm Väyrynen's (1991) actor transformation, issue transformation, rule transformation and structural transformation classification of the type of transformation required in the process.

According to Väyrynen (1991), the first to be tackled in the transformation process is actor transformation. This refers to the changes in major actors or parties to the conflict. It may also be due to the appearance of new actors joining due to the death of the old ones due especially in the case of protracted conflicts. The second is issue transformation which regards the real issues that are underpinning the conflict. These are the real needs and interests of the parties. Third, rule transformation is about the norms that regulate actor behaviour and further stipulate modes of interactions between the parties and set boundaries between them. Lastly, structural transformation is also concerned with restructuring the changes that have taken place in the structures of society which cause and perpetuate conflicts. Väyrynen noted that conflict transformation can be consciously induced or can occur without the intention of the parties. The four levels of transformation must be carried out in any conflict situation to ensure a successful transformation.

The fact that conflict transformation borrows concepts from conflict resolution has resulted in arguments that there are no differences between conflict transformation and conflict resolution and that it is just a matter of semantics (Best, 2006; Botes, 2004). The situation where the two perspectives are used interchangeably tends to suggest a dearth in conceptualisation and theorisation of conflict transformation thus culminating in conflict transformation being likened to conflict resolution, conflict management and peacebuilding. These critics assert that the two perspectives or approaches are just different by name but produce the same outcome; end conflicts.

Other critics also argued that conflict transformation should happen before conflict resolution (Constantinou, 2015). However, some have intimated

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that there are significant differences between the two perspectives although it shares some concepts and ideas regarding conflict resolution and conflict management (see Botes, 2003; Miall, 2004; Rhodes, 2008; Richmond, 2010). Botes noted that though the two terms are used interchangeably, they are not the same and that there are shifts towards conflict transformation by academics and practitioners in peace and conflict. But to others conflict transformation encompasses peacebuilding since it focuses on delivering change in the characteristics of the conflict and serves as a method for inducing change in the relationship between conflict parties (Lederach, 2000; 2003; Merry, 2000).

Peacebuilding is a process of creating self-supporting structures that remove causes of conflicts and offer alternatives to violence in situations. In crux, peacebuilding comprises all actions target the restoration of positive peace which include conflict prevention, efforts aimed at dealing with the root causes of conflict and focus on activities to promote the reconciliation of the parties. It is not only the absence of violence or the fear of violence but also the fostering of social systems that support the well-being of individuals and groups, help realise social harmony and equitable human potential and ensure basic needs are met. This prevents negative peace which encourages discrimination against groups and deprivation of others from acts that promote acts that make segments of the society live in inhumane conditions of squalor, poverty, deprivation, injustice and violence (Galtung, 1969; Interpeace, 2010).

The conflict transformation theory is the appropriate theoretical ground to help fully deal with protracted conflicts (Lederach, 1996; 2003). Lederach added that the conflict transformation perspective is better positioned to solve intractable or protracted social conflicts especially when the cultural

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backgrounds and practices of the parties and the relationship that exists between them matter to all the stakeholders (Avruch, 2006; Lederach & Maiese, 2003). According to Goetschel (2009), conflict transformation is premised on the assumption that conflicting parties are more concerned about restoring their relationships than just resolution. Conflict transformation aims to change the attitudes, behaviours, interests, discourses, relationships and structures that serve as conduits for conflict by encouraging and conditioning violent conflicts between incompatible groups (Dudouet, 2004; 2007). Thus, the conflict transformation process requires collaboration, interaction, interdependence, possible total commitment and devotion of the parties and other stakeholders to ensure a constructive change in society.

In sum, conflict transformation is the process of consciously taking steps to address underlying structural issues that cause conflicts or altering the concerns that surround conflicts constructively to ensure that the disputing parties appreciate the positive changes, go beyond past issues and develop peaceful relationships by constructively working on it. The perspective goes beyond the mere resolution or management of the conflict to find ways of remedying the relationships between the disputing parties. From this perspective, to achieve positive peace, efforts must be made to increase social justice, equal access and opportunity to power, resources and equality before the law. The approach is a process and at the same time, an end in itself and so it is long-term and depends heavily on the inventiveness and novelty of the people to accomplish it. Quick fixes and short-term results are not how the approach views the process instead, peace and improvements in changes must be short to medium-term. By this, the mediator must seek beyond common

ground, and devise means of reconnecting the broken relationship. Conflict transformation focuses on cultivating sustainable societies through cultivating cordial relationships, increasing justice and instituting procedures for non-violent redress of grievances.

Having established the need to mainstream culture into finding durable peace, and the importance of conflict transformation for restructuring relationships and structures in the case of protracted conflicts, I can turn attention to how to make culture and cultural practices sustainable in conflict transformation. Conflict transformation states the need for contextualizing culture, especially the traditions of combatants in restructuring protracted conflict but does not indicate how to make these methods sustainable for future transformation agenda, thus the need for cultural sustainability approach. Also, since this study is located within the field of cultural studies and so there is a need to review the literature on cultural sustainability, and its relevance to the study in the next section.

Cultural Sustainability Theory

The cultural sustainability theory establishes the need for culture in all facets of human existence and especially in making development sustainable and in producing resilient and sustainable societies (Davies, 2015; James, 2015). According to Kagan (2018), culture is important for social change and that culture enables creativity and engagement when it is considered a tool for transformation. Kagan's view is shared earlier by Duxbury and Jeannotte (2011) who assert that culture serves as an engine for social change in the general transformation of society in a positive way. However, culture is not being given much consideration in the strategies. It is important to note that sustainable

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development cannot be reached without culture being considered in this quest (Duxbury & Jeannotte 2011;2016; Hawkes, 2001).

According to Soini and Dessein (2016), the theory has three dimensions which are culture in sustainability, culture for sustainability and culture as sustainability. One can adopt one of these to establish the role you want culture to play in your sustainability approach. The *culture in sustainability* dimension is where cultural sustainability is considered parallel to the existing three pillars; ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Emphasis is on how to conserve, maintain and preserve cultural capital such as arts, heritage, knowledge, and cultural diversity and hand it to generations. Culture is considered an independent pillar of social sustainability (Dessein et al., 2015). The second dimension, *culture for sustainability* considers culture to be mediating the achievement of economic, social, and ecological sustainability. The dimension considers both tangible and intangible culture as essential resources for local economic development. Cultural values and perceptions need considering to achieve ecological or social sustainability (Dessein et al, 2015).

The third dimension of cultural sustainability, *culture as sustainability* also considers culture as a necessary foundation based on which the target of sustainability can be met. This dimension encloses the other pillars of sustainability and becomes an overarching dimension of sustainability. In other words, sustainability becomes embedded in a culture which then leads to eco-cultural civilization (Dessein et al, 2015). For this study, I will adopt *culture as sustainability* dimension as stipulated by Robinson (2021) as he advocates the sustainability of all cultures. This helps to ensure desirable futures for all cultures. Here, all the diverse cultures that exist within the society are allowed

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to exist and be practiced. The culture as sustainability approach does not see sustainability as a collection of separate domains, as advanced by Hawkes (2001), but as a collection of personal, social, cultural, political and economic realities. This can be effectively explored to ensure that there is a sustainable transformation of protracted conflicts between the contending parties by exploring their cultures and bringing the important practices to ensure durable peace.

The *cultures of sustainability* approach to cultural sustainability will enable the researcher to give consideration to the cultures of the Alavanyo and Nkonya, and focus on the aspects that can be made sustainable and be used to transform the conflict. Conflicts affect all aspects of human life (Lederach, 2003; LeBaron, 2003) including future generations. Thus, sustainability must focus on generations unborn (Throsby, 1997; 2003). Throsby (2017) articulates three principles that cultural sustainability must focus on; inter-generational equity, intra-generational equity, and the importance of diversity. To Throsby, inter-generational equity stipulates that development must be long-term and should make future generations beneficiaries of development initiatives undertaken today. Intra-generational equity must also aim to provide equity to cultural needs and practices. Here, all the practices must be made to benefit future generations and must be fairly handed down to them by their forebears. The third principle, according to Throsby, is the importance of diversity. This emphasises cultural blends otherwise referred to as interculturality. Diversity is beautiful, therefore, there is a need to allow all cultures to be brought on board thereby ensuring plurality, cultural enrichment and social cohesion (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2016).

Insofar as this study is seeking ways of dealing with conflict and preventing it from recurring in various forms, leading to a consensual and legitimate, discursive and material form of emancipation, the adoption of culture as a tool for the transformation of conflicts is a good call since culture is enduring and makes human beings human (Mavalla & Osah, 2017). Conflict transformation aims to emancipate societies involved in violent conflicts by using resources found in the same society to change the violent relationships between the parties. Culture and therefore cultural practices are a resource that can be depended on for the needed emancipation to take place (Ateng et al, 2018; Ibrahim, 2018; Issifu & Bukari, 2022; Issifu, 2015). There is, therefore, the need for culture to be made sustainable and handed down to generations (Kagan, 2018; Throsby & Petetskaya, 2016; Wahab et al, 2012). This also fits into the design of this study as the study aims to find those cultural practices that can aid the transformation of protracted conflicts and make them sustainable and this will be handed down to generations to come.

In a narrow view, cultural sustainability theory has questioned the production or organisation of meaning which is considered a site of power. Cultural processes are important and interesting because they are a medium through which powerful social relationships play out and in which possibilities for social betterment are also opened up or closed down (Dissein et. al., 2016). A typical way of posing 'power questions' has been in terms of identity, especially where identity is seen as a problematic issue, and where individual and collective identities are understood as being always created under social pressures (Grossberg, Hall & Du Gay, 1996). Dudouet and Dressler (2016) added that power is at the base of identity formation and these are rooted in

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culture. In the context of Alavanyo and Nkonya, the issue of identity has assumed centrality in the conflict where members of the opposing sides are considered threats and could be attacked when seen among members of the other group. Identity is crucial as it is reproduced based on power and is important to the analysis of the conflict between the two ethnic groups.

The study focuses on some cultural elements or traditions within the two cultures and explores them to ascertain their propensity to aid the transformation process. These are arts (paintings and sculptures), language (adages and proverbs), music and dance, values, beliefs, festivals (durbars), marriage (inter-marriages) and inheritance among others. Some structural issues were also examined to ascertain how they can also be used for a successful conflict transformation. Some of these are political (unequal power-play and access to political leadership), economic (jobs and access to land), socio-cultural (identity and group status) and religious (belief in gods and ancestors, libation pouring, values associated with inheritance), and how these contribute to conflict transformation is explored in the following sub-section.

The theory of cultural sustainability considers culture as the essential foundation and structure for achieving the aims of sustainable development. The theory helps me to establish some important tangible and intangible aspects of the culture that can be made resilient and can be depended on to transform the century-old conflict. Both tangible and intangible aspects of culture will be considered for the project. The *values* (interdependence), *institutions* (marriage, chieftaincy, and traditional organisation), *customs and beliefs* (in ancestors, inheritance), *language* (sameness, adages), and festival celebrations. These will

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be considered interdependent components that need to be considered as a whole and not as independent parts.

From the foregone, the section on theoretical review looked at protracted social conflict, culture, indigenous wholistic theory, conflict transformation, and cultural sustainability. Protracted social conflict refers to a prolonged and entrenched conflict that can span several generations, making it particularly complex and challenging to address due to the changing nature of the context. Culture and indigenous wholistic theory are key components of conflict transformation efforts which aims at resolving protracted conflicts. Indigenous wholistic theory emphasises the interconnectedness of all things, including people, culture, the environment, and spirituality. This conflict transformation approach recognises that conflicts can be deeply rooted in cultural differences, and seeks to address the underlying issues to create lasting peace.

In the context of protracted conflicts, cultural sustainability is an important notion that acknowledges the importance of preserving cultural traditions and practices that may have been disrupted by the conflict. Cultural sustainability can serve to create a sense of continuity and identity for people and communities, and also provide an important foundation for conflict transformation efforts. To effectively address protracted conflict through cultural sustainability and indigenous wholistic theory, conflict transformation initiatives should hinge on engaging with local communities and leaders, building trust and relationships, and incorporating local cultural practices and traditions into strategies aimed at transforming destructive conflicts. Overall, incorporating culture and indigenous wholistic theory into conflict transformation efforts can help to address the root causes of protracted conflicts

and create a more sustainable and peaceful society that recognises and respects diverse cultures.

Considering that cultural sustainability and cultures of sustainability and their importance to this study have been established, the theories governing the study have been reviewed and the linkages established between them, the next section will focus on the conceptual issues. Here, issues relating to the selected cultural practices and that contribute to conflict transformation in various studies that have been conducted study.

Conceptual Issues

In this section, I take a look at the conceptualisation of the three major concepts used in this study. Thus, there is a review of protracted social conflicts, culture and conflict transformation as it has been used by others and it is used in this study.

Protracted social conflict

Protracted social conflict (PSC) according to Azar (1990, p. 12) "occur when communities are deprived of the satisfaction of their basic needs based on their communal identity". However, the deprivation results from a complex causal chain involving the role of the state. According to Azar, factors such as the role of the state or government, international linkages and the multi-ethnic or diverse composition of the citizens within the state are the factors that contribute to the occurrence of the PSC. But these factors have to precede and present conditions which will be conducive to the marginalisation of some groups by others. To the theory, these are the types of conflicts that have become protracted globally. These conflicts are communal and mostly take place at the intra- or inter-group levels and where the groups are defined based on ethnicity.

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Some of these inter-group conflicts based on identity in Ghana are ethnic, resource and chieftaincy conflicts (Tonah, 2007).

Though Azar's conceptualisation formed the basis for the consideration of these forms of conflict, it came under scrutiny as criticisms were levelled against it for lacking some concerns such as the parties to the conflict being limited to non-state actors only. Thus, Beaudoin (2013, p. 10) states that PSC can be defined as:

> a prolonged conflictual relationship characterized by the intermittent violent interactions between at least one nonstate actor and another entity over an extended period of time sufficient to have become fully embedded into the social fabric of the conflict group(s) wherein issues of contention, that can remain the same or change over time, are perceived by both actors to be inseparably linked to national, individual, and/or, societal needs, and are considered to be non-negotiable.

Beaudoin's (2013) definition expands on Azar's (1990) definition capturing non-state actors which can be ethnic or religious groups as well as individuals, the issues that can also change over time due to the prolonged nature of the conflict. This study aligns with Beaudoin's conceptualisations of PSC since the Alavanyo-Nkonya PSC is an ethnic (identity) and a resource-related (land) conflict at the community level manifesting between the two ethnicities of Alavanyo (Ewe) and Nkonya (Guan). Ethnicity is at the core of identity since that assigns boundaries of whom people are related to and who is not. Being a member of a particular group confers certain features or markers on you and sets a group apart from others (Agyeman, 2005; Geertz, 1973; Rothman, 1999). The conflict has become intractable, and the issues in the conflict have kept changing through the course of the conflict.

Protracted social conflicts are hostile interactions between two or more parties which extend over long periods with erratic outbreaks of open violence that fluctuate in occurrence and intensity. These are present conflict situations in which the stakes are high where the conflicts can involve whole societies or communities and where the issues and benefits act as agents for defining the scope of national identity and social solidarity and seem to have no distinguishable endpoint (Miall, 2004). It is only in the long run that they will "end" by cooling off, transforming or withering away; one cannot expect these conflicts to be terminated by explicit decision (Azar, 1978). These have been critiqued that some of these conflicts can end when the right approaches are used, the parties are ready for peace and they are involved in the process and agree with the terms.

Recall that conflict has varied definitions stemming from the purpose and perspectives of the experts or academics such as Agyeman (2008) who conceives conflict as a struggle for access to opportunities, resources, existing rights and privileges of society, and community or a group. Thus, conflicts are integrated into human existence and will always surface when differences arise between parties due to incompatible means and goals. However, this research identifies with Austin et al's (2011, p. 10-11) conceptualisation that conflict is "a complex social phenomenon that, as a driver of social change, can be shaped both non-violently and violently". This definition suggests that conflicts can be deliberately shaped to be violent or not. The research focuses on how violent conflicts that threaten the peace and security of societies can be restructured from being violent and destructive into peaceful and constructive. According to Azar and Farah (1984), conflict ranges from a myriad of connotations such as

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interpersonal aggression to wars and this makes conflicts fluid and infinitely an elastic concept, that can be stretched and fabricated into different shapes. This confirms the definition by Austin et al (2004). The fluid nature of the concept has created sharp divisions among scholars in the field.

Different criteria have been and continue to be used for determining protracted social conflicts. The Upsala University Conflict Resolution Programme's Correlates of War (COW) used different criteria. Protractedness, as noted by Uppsala University considers the number of occurrences per year, the duration of the conflict to be more than 25 years and the casualties per year of a minimum of 25 deaths. However, Azar (1978; 1990) states that four components are necessary for a conflict to be considered protracted. The components of PSCs are 1) the participation of non-state actors; 2) a minimum of 20 years of violent conflict; 3) a minimum of three violence/peace cycles, and 4) 500 or more deaths (directly related to the conflict).

The four criteria listed by Azar (1978) provide a clear, and measurable criterion from which a long-term violent conflict can be evaluated to determine whether it can be classified as PSC. For this research, both the Azar and Upsala criteria were used to determine the protractedness of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict as some of the criteria from both have played out in the conflict since its formative stages. The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict, which is the focus of this study is close to a century since the first violent clash between the parties and has had over ten violent/peace cycles, the actors are non-state actors and have had several deaths. Therefore, this conflict qualifies to be considered a protracted social conflict.

Culture

Culture comes from the Latin word *colore* meaning *to practice* or *cherish*. According to Wahab, Odunsi and Ajiboye (2012), people cannot be separated from their cultures, especially in sub-Saharan Africa due to how they cherish these ways handed to them by their forebears. This they noted is based on the fact that culture makes human societies what they are. According to Wahab et al, culture determines society so society and culture are intertwined. However, conceptualising culture has been a difficult task for both anthropologists and sociologists who deal with the concept in their work (Avruch, 2006; Dudouet & Dressler, 2016).

Avruch (2006) stated that the definition of culture should not be limited to nationality, language or race or any such identities, instead, it should be conceived via what defines them as human beings; how meanings are created and given to experiences by constantly inferring from and trying to make meanings and significance from the environment. Avruch (2006) defined culture as the totality of experiences that humans gather and the meanings that are attached to the happenings around them. These experiences are what make humans what they are and everything that defines them. Culture is embedded in the experiences gathered over the period of existence. These are acquired during the process of socialisation and transferred to the next generations by their forebears. Thus, culture is learnt and transferred from one generation to the next and it is therefore imperative for custodians of culture to keep their culture safe and also transfer it to the next generation (Wahab et al., 2012).

With the responsibility placed on the present generation to preserve the culture and hand it over to the next generation, Wahab et al. (2012) noted that

if this is not done, the culture or traditions of the groups will be eroded especially since culture is as old as man himself without which, man is reduced to an animal. Culture is defined as a collection of experiences (including conflict) and if the culture is affected by conflict, that same culture can be the panacea for transforming the destructive conflict into a peaceful and constructive one (Avruch, 2006). Culture then becomes the driver for sustainable transformation of the conflict and helping achieve the sustainable and peaceful societies earmarked by Goal 16 of the SDGs. Everything human beings do is cultural or is informed by culture. Culture is all-encompassing and, therefore, serves as an engine of growth and social change (Kagan, 2010).

There is, therefore, the need to consider and understand the environment where the conflict is taking place before attempts are made to manage, resolve or transform it to ensure the attainment of sustainable peace in the end (Dudouet & Dressler, 2016; Lederach, 2003; Ramsbotham et al, 2017; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Richmond, 2010). There are two important things to be considered in these attempts; first, the context within which the conflict is taking place is important just as the mechanism to be used and second, the analysis of the stakeholders is also needed to be able to know those involved in the conflict, their motivation for the conflict and why the conflict is important to them. What is the conflict about? Is it identity, power, money or land? It may even just be about accepting responsibility and rendering an apology, the failure of which the peace process could stall (suggesting the need to understand the culture and the traditions of the people involved in the conflict). Furthermore, it must be understood that culture is flexible, fluid and continuously changing (Avruch, 2006; Ross, 2009).

This thesis is premised on the fact that, all too often, culture is a neglected aspect of finding lasting peace to disagreements in society (Avruch, 2006). Cultural mismatch and the lack of appreciation and understanding of the culture(s) of the disputing parties also add to complicate and probably impede the strides being made and create misconceptions that could hamper acceptable cooperation from both parties and derail the achievement of peace (Austin, Fischer & Giessmann, 2011; Lederach, 1995). This happens when a neutral third party, who most of the time, comes from a different cultural background, is selected to mediate and broker peace between the conflicting parties. When the parties to the conflict start taking steps at finding peace with an understanding of their cultures and paying attention to their modes of communication during the peace process, the higher the likelihood for the parties to find dialogue smoother and peace can be achieved early.

With the notion that culture is always present and changing, I go on to point out the importance of "normalizing" the situation (or dialogue or the use of language). During the charged moments, and moves are being made towards finding peace, it is the job of the neutral third party and the leadership of the parties to channel their energies of the conflicting parties and guide the various styles of communication towards a more normalised playing field where the conflicting parties feel like stakeholders. Each party comes to the table with his or her own tradition – or culture – and so ensures the mediator's efforts to understand and raise awareness on that and design ways these cultures can be used positively to resolve the disagreement. Intercultural discussions will enhance a smoother transformation.

Conflict transformation

Lederach (2014, p. 9) defines conflict transformation with the objective of the field in mind. He states:

> conflict transformation is to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships.

To Lederach, conflict is a normal phenomenon in society since it is embedded in the social structures of society and proceeds to further indicate that the changes should lead to increased justice since increased justice will lead to peace. Lederach asserts that conflict is an opportunity and thus, a gift since it provides opportunities for changes or improvements to be made to conflictual behaviours. Conflict transformation considers justice in accessing and distributing resources to people and assures a high propensity for peace to be achieved. Thus, there must be a change in the status quo that resulted from the conflict. The changes must be at the personal or individual, group relationships and institutional and structural levels of society to ensure comprehensive transformation in conflictual societies (Buckley-Zistel, 2008; Goetschel & Hagmann, 2009; Mavalla & Osah, 2017).

The conflict transformation approach goes beyond the mere resolution of an undesired event (conflict) to institutionalizing something more desirable that serves to satisfy society in its entirety (see Lederach, 2003, p. 33). Lederach suggests a shift from conflict resolution and conflict management to conflict transformation due to the changing dynamics of conflicts and this can best be

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addressed by the conflict transformation approach (Miall, 2004; Osei-Kufuor & Bukari, 2022; Rhodes, 2008; Richmond, 2001; 2009; 2010).

Considering all the above, the conceptualisation by Austin et al (2004, p. 464-465) sums up conflict transformation as:

> actions and processes which seek to alter the various characteristics and manifestations of conflict by addressing the root causes of a particular conflict over the long term. It aims to transform negative destructive conflict into positive constructive conflict and deal with structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects of the conflict. The term refers to both the process and the completion of the process.

Austin et al., (2004) consider conflict transformation from a different angle which makes conflict transformation both a means and an end. This conceptualisation by Austin et al. also points to the changes that are required to mend an antagonistic human behaviour into a more cordial one that is devoid of all forms of rancour.

From the definitions considered so far, for a holistic transformation of conflicts, these changes must not only target the individual and group relationships but must also take place within the structures that have also experienced changes due to the destructive, violent and protracted conflict. In short, conflict transformation can be equated to a process of social change as changes in attitudes and behaviours can result in changes in the structures of society, thereby affecting different system levels at different times and by extension, the entire society goes through the transformative process (Buckley-Zistel, 2008; Tikka, 2019; Wani et al, 2013).

Cultural Sustainability

I adopt the definition of cultural sustainability by Farsani, Coelho and Costa (2012, p. 30):

> the concept for the recovery and protection of cultural identities. It is linked to previous traditional practices through celebrating local and regional histories and passing down cultural values to future generations.

The conceptualisation by Farsani et al, emphasises the need to recover and protect traditional values and practices that were sidelined due to other influences that may have resulted in their sidelining. The celebration of these histories will then contribute to the revitalisation of the practices and the values will be restored amongst the celebrants. This confirms the *Sankofa* philosophy in the Ghanaian culture where it is said there is no harm going back for good things that may have been left or forgotten. This can then be handed down to posterity.

Cultural Practices and Conflict Transformation

In this section, I turn attention to a review of cultural practices selected for the study, ethnicity and ethnic conflicts and how these have been conceptualised in this study.

It has been said that to increase the chance of successfully transforming conflicts and ensuing durable peace, there is a need to do that via the use of culturally sustainable methods that are indigenous and which the people identify with (Absonlon, 1995; 2010; Issifu & Bukari, 2022; Bukari, 2013; Tsega, 2004; Rambotham et al., 2017). Having established the need for conflict transformation in the African context, and the need for the culture and traditions of the combatants, the focus will be shifted to some cultural practices and

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conflict transformation. Some aspects of culture or cultural practices such as language, music, customs and beliefs, festival celebrations, and inter-marriages among others, will be discussed and how they can contribute to conflict transformation will be looked at in the following subsections.

Language and conflict transformation

Language is the medium through which culture is transferred from generation to generation. Language though has been the medium through which the conflicts are resolved or ceased, it has also been a medium through which some conflicts escalated and attained levels of destruction that have left dents on the conscience of society. It provided the avenue for passions to be inflamed and egos, bruised and making some conflicts protracted. Inflammatory speeches have been used to incite one side against the other(s) in a conflict. In the Rwandan case, the metaphor of referring to the Tutsi as cockroaches dehumanised them and make them objects of attack for the Hutu and where these are established in the language of the groups (Iloh, Okafor & Oghomitse, 2021).

The language(s) of the group(s) involved in the conflict, in cases of inter-group conflicts, is also equally important in the processes leading to transformation. As we think about culture on a small scale, there is a need not to forget the larger and more general or national aspects. In processes considered to augment the conflictual behaviour between two groups with different dialects such as in Alavanyo and Nkonya, the style of communication will also vary, so consideration must be given to how slow or fast they speak since these can also affect the transformation process. Further still, there is the need to engage in active listening. The observances regarding conversation and speech must be

key to the processes. Also, which language to adopt is very much needed to be agreed on by all the parties involved in the transformation.

In Ghana, the case the Konkomba ethnic group is noted to have conflicted with most of their neighbours, Nanumba, Bimoba, and Chokossi, among others where these conflicts), were classified as "wars of emancipation" (Awedoba, 2009; Jönsson, 2007). Lederach (2005) indicated how language can influence a peaceful end to a conflict. Lederach notes that during the peace workshop organised to end the Konkomba and Nanumba conflicts in 1994, the Nanumba paramount chief of the area in his speech used words that nearly marred the peace talks. But the Konkomba youth leader in his response used solemn words that appealed to the sensitivity and authority of the Nanumba overlord and this changed the aura of the peace talks where the Nanum overlord apologised to the Konkomba group present. The peace talks went on peacefully and durable peace was achieved. As a result, it is clear language and choice of words play a significant role in achieving peace.

Music, dance and conflict transformation

Music offers a tremendous impact on peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Music is conceived as humanly organised sounds (Youngerman, 1975). That tells the universality of music. Though music can also be used to whip up negative sentiments for conflict to pervade a specific social milieu, it can also be the solution to violent tendencies that could escalate into a full-scale war, same music can be used for peaceful purposes (Kagan & Kirchberg, 2016). Urbain (2018) refers to the phenomenon of music having this dual effect as "Ambivalence" in his seminal work on *Business and Music for Peacebuilding Activities*. Evidence points to music being composed by a

Rwandan artist, Simon Bikindi "I hate these Hutu" in the days before the genocide. It is believed to have incited hatred towards the Hutu and was used as an anthem during the genocide of 1994 which resulted in the killing of one million Tutsi, Hutu and moderate Hutus in Rwanda between April and July 1994. Music can be a "double-edged sword" in that whilst it can appeal to the emotions for the right course and heal, it can also be deployed instead to strengthen prejudice, build tensions and cause conflict. So, the type of music depends very much on the intent of the composer and the emotional state of the listener (Kagan & Kirchberg, 2016; Urbain, 2015; 2018).

Music can be used at various fora to appeal to their senses and unite people during and after conflict. Music can be used at dialogue meetings, and the type of traditional songs and music that appeals to the soul and spirit of the people can be used as this calls on the ancestors to come and witness and see them through the phase and help restore peace (Urbain, 2008). Arthur Schopenhauer in 1818 stated that "music is the language of feeling and passion, as words are the language of reason". This quote suggests that music is capable of rousing very deep emotions in people and has a healing effect it introduces into the human person depending on the words, context and audience.

Music has also been noted to have therapeutic or healing properties which makes it a good aspect of culture or cultural practice for conflict transformation, resolution or peacebuilding (Ramsbotham et al., 2017). It has been used as therapy for the battered and societies recovering from protracted violence to bring full recovery and the transformation of strained relationships as was the case in South Africa after apartheid and Rwanda after the genocide (Jordenger, 2008). In a study by Jordenger on Chechnya and Kosovo ex-combatants after

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the war and how music was added to the therapy and healing process showed that music can heal the battered during and after conflict and restore full health.

Music, which is also part of the culture of a human collectivity, is given prominence in the methods adopted to resolve and transform conflict. In light of these sustainable benefits of music in transforming conflicts and ensuring peace, the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, "Music leaps across language barriers and unites people of quite different cultural backgrounds. Thus, through music, all peoples can come together to make the world a more harmonious place" (Annan, cited in Kent, 2008). Why then are academics and practitioners in Ghana and for that matter Africa hesitant to consider the cultural adherences and traditions such as music and dance in trying to find peace in conflict-prone societies?

Though music and arts have the potential of introducing creativity and societal transformation toward sustainability it has not gained much attention over recent years by receiving the needed focus. When musical experiences and practice are shared on the collective level, it enhances group cohesion, and musical improvisation trains social creativity, both of which are important resources for the resilience of society (Kagan & Kirchberg, 2016; Schippers & Grant, 2016). Turning to the experience of music on the individual level, cultures of sustainability can be fostered through a musical aesthetics of complexity that opens up to the ambiguities, ambivalences, contradictions and creatively chaotic dimensions of a transformation towards sustainability.

Art and conflict transformation

According to Ramsbotham et al, (2017, p. 408), "dimensions of feeling, emotion, imagery and imagination, which are stimulated when peace and

conflict are subjects of the visual and other arts, are important but under-utilized reservoirs and motivations for conflict resolution". Art, especially paintings, sculptures, photographs, videos and movies on the causes of conflicts, when documented and preserved for generations has the propensity to deter generations yet to come from engaging in acts that can lead to violence and the effects associated with them (Ramsbotham, 2017). When these art forms are used to elicit the needed emotions, peaceful outcomes result from hitherto very violent conflicts. Victims living with various degrees of trauma, find relief as was the case in Yugoslavia and Pakistan.

It has been noted that there was the need to document and keep paintings, sculptures, pictures, videos, and other forms of artworks of violence as this can serve as a tool for conflict transformation as it serves as deterrence for posterity. However, in the case of Ghana, the ills of war and other forms of violent conflicts are not documented in pictorial and video modes for storage and possibly put on display years after thereby neglecting the transformative deterrence of these cultural art forms and helping the process of transformation and sustainable peace. Some pictures can be found but mostly in newspaper publications which are not even properly stored to serve the purpose of conflict transformation. Most of these ends up destroyed after a few years. This calls for findings into how these can be addressed.

Identity and conflict transformation

For particular conflicts to be categorised as inter-group conflicts (for instance, religious, ethnic, or racial), the parties and their opponents must both have a sense of collective identity about themselves and the opposing parties, with each side believing the dispute is between "us" and "them" or "our group"

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and "their group" and where the opponents are regarded as enemies (Connor, 1994; Cunnigham, 1998) and the target of the parties are to either injure, maim, neutralise or eliminate their opponents (Coser, 1956; 2019). Some of those conflicts that are based on "we" and "they" are the conflicts that become protracted or intractable, and with their destructive tendencies persist for long periods, despite the frantic efforts made by stakeholders to end them. In some of these conflicts, the antagonists tend to fight each other regarding the different identities and characteristics that they hold high about themselves and those they attribute to the other party in the conflict. Such conflicts are often referred to as identity-based conflicts and are regarded as the type of conflict that becomes protracted (Kriegsberg, 1973).

As noted earlier, disputes have their roots in psycho-sociological, socioeconomic, political, and international conditions. Normally, a condition of factors causes violence between the parties (Mason & Rychard, 2005). Ethnic conflicts with their attendant resource issues have claimed more lives in Ghana since ethnicity, which is the primary form of identity formation, is primordial as the relationship between various ethnicities and conflicts has suggested (Ahiave, 2013; Awedoba 2009; Jönsson, 2007; Kendie et al, 2014; Prah & Yeboah, 2011; Tonah, 2007; Tonah & Anamzoya, 2016; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). According to Oshita (2005), most if not all conflicts in Africa, are underlined by ethnic identity issues regardless of their proximate causes. This suggests that contestations over resources would emerge between groups that identify themselves and others on such socialised forms as ethnicity, religion or political ideologies.

According to Tonah and Anamzoya (2016), note that although conflicts in Ghana may begin from a single cause but examination point to a confluence of issues as causes. It may start as one but after a thorough analysis, it may have other causes and dimensions to it including political and religious conflicts. The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict is a resource (water and later land) cum ethnic (identity) and to political participation, and Indian hemp cultivation since it is also defined by the parties involved. Thus, the Alavanyo-Nkonya groups define their identities based on ethnic differences. The Alavanyo (Ewe) and Nkonya (Guan) and this study aim to establish whether the conflict is a resource conflict as many tend to suggest or it is an ethnic or identity conflict.

Power and conflict transformation

Societies all over the world have their customs and traditions within which power and other related issues are founded or defined. Minority and majority group relations are behind and at the base of determining the side that has the power and control and the side that is to be controlled. Another core issue that the conflict transformation theory considers to be the underlying issue embedded in protracted conflicts is power imbalances or unequal power between conflicting parties (Dahrendorf, 1990).

Other experts in the field have also looked at the issue of power and how this play in conflict transformation and their concern was how the balance or imbalances in power between conflicting parties affect attempts at transformation. These inequalities or imbalances are referred to as power asymmetries (Curle, 1971; Dahrendorf, 1990; Dudouet, 2007; Dudouet & Dressler, 2016). Lederach (1995; 2003) notes unequal power between parties in

the relational and structural levels of the conflict transformation and how these can derail transformation attempts unless power is balanced between the parties.

In examining the mechanisms used in Alavanyo-Nkonya so far, it appears that the root causes such as identity (ethnic/cultural) issues and access to and equal distribution of resources are left unattended to as seen in the conflict resolution mechanisms adopted but this is central to conflict transformation. The neglect of culture in other methods, especially the Western ones is addressed through conflict transformation and thus, the need to consider it (Best, 2006). Culture has positive parts that make it important for conflict transformation and why those parts must be sustained and factored into peace attempts. Thus, the need to explore them in this study.

Ethnicity, Resources and Ethnic Conflicts

"Ethnicity" comes from the Greek word *ethnos* meaning *nation*. It can also mean a community of people of common descent. An ethnic group is considered a kinship group that is linked by ties of blood (real or putative). Ethnic differences have been cited as a major cause of many sectarian conflicts around the globe and especially in Africa (Faleti, 2006; Nnoli, 1998). Ghana has also witnessed several conflicts such as chieftaincy, resource (land) related and ethnic conflicts but many of the devastating ones were inter- or intra-ethnic (Agyeman, 2008; Jönsson, 2007; Kendie et al, 2014; Tonah, 2007). In the peace and conflict literature, ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts have been conceived from three varying theoretical viewpoints: constructivism, instrumentalism and primordialism. This study will consider the two that best explain ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Africa with the Alavanyo-Nkonya case in Ghana particularly (Tonah, 2007; Tonah & Anamzoya, 2016; Tsikata & Seini, 2004).

Instrumentalism holds that ethnicity and ethnic identities are not permanent and depend greatly on the agency or rationalisation of the individual or group concerned. Instrumentalists contend that ethnic conflicts stem from the rational considerations of those involved as they engage in a cost-benefit analysis to assess their propensity to win and achieve the expected goal of benefitting from a resource before they participate in the conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). To the instrumentalist, ethnicity is a resource in the hands of the political elites who use it to their benefit and mobilise followers at the grassroots to act on their fears and which go along to benefit the elites involved (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Instrumentalism asserts that ethnic conflicts are driven by the need for economic gains and the satisfaction of economic wants or as a result of the active manipulation of ethnic identities by political leaders (elites) for their political gains (McDoom, 2011). Instrumentalism focuses solely on economic resources and how it inures to the benefit of the individual or group involved. It focuses on human agency and its benefits.

Constructivists like Flesken (2014) and McDoom (2011) posit that social psychology and history play a big role in the origin of ethnic conflicts. Constructivism holds that ethnicity is constructed and this depends on the interactions and experiences collected over the years. Thus, ethnicity is a product of historical processes that have taken place over time that have resulted in the adoption of divergent ethnic identities (McDoom, 2011). These experiences depend greatly on the constructs or language that are handed down by the forebears (Flesken, 2014). Constructivism, like instrumentalism, rejects the permanency of ethnicity and ethnic identity, how these cause conflicts and how emotional attachments people have for their ethnic group fuel and sustain

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conflicts as espoused by primordialism (McDoom, 2011). The emotive content and its role in conflicts are rejected as people all over the world have these attachments and if that assertion by primordialism is anything to go by, then the world must be filled with violent ethnic conflicts.

Primordialism originates from the writings of Geertz (1973) who outlines the concept of primordialism and suggests that ethnic 'ties' as inherent in human beings have a deep, 'natural' need to connect to others based on some commonalities and these connections that link us to some people, at the same time, leads to natural divisions with others, whether based on race, religion, language or location. The divisions, therefore, are explained by the natural 'ties' known as 'ancient hatreds' (Weir, 2012). Primordialism, according to Weir, posits that ethnicity is the result of ancient hatreds and histories of mistrust between different ethnic groups and ethnic conflicts stem naturally and inevitably from ancient hatreds between ethnic groups.

Ethnic identities are considered permanent and are acquired from parentage or ancestry and are assigned through the process of socialisation as parents assign their ethnic identities to their children as handed to them by their parents in cases where one is born and ascribed to a predetermined ethnicity or identity (Chandra, 2001). To primordialist theory, ethnic conflicts arise as a result of one or more ethnic groups being deprived of accessing resources based on their group identity or difference (Connor, 1994; Azar, 1990). Ethnic group association, therefore, becomes the basis of accessing rights and privileges in society (Agyeman, 2008).

Though the theory may have elements of 'common sense' notions, it has widely been disregarded due to its simplification of complex situations, and its

suggestions of ethnic conflict is a natural phenomenon and it is to be expected. It has been widely discredited for its emphasis on emotional content which has been alluded to as the reason for the destructive nature of ethnic conflicts (Chandra, 2004). Thus, the strength of the theory is its weakness as the instrumentalists claim that, different ethnic groups do not always end up in conflict and that the conflict arises out of the non-satisfaction of basic economic needs by one group due to their being frustrated by another (Chandra, 2001; Fearon & Laitin, 2003).

Primordial theorists also criticise constructivism and instrumentalism for failing to discuss the emotional attachments that groups have towards their groups and members and how they fail to address the wave of destruction such as killings and maiming left after ethnic dissent. One critique of the theory is that ethnic identities are not natural or given as it is made to seem as Fenton (2003, p. 81) observes. In his critique of primordialism, he notes that 'people may think of these divisions as natural, we knew that they are culturally and socially moulded, as well as being grounded in place, language and shared historic experience'.

From the foregone, ethnicity in Ghana is based on constructivist and primordialist conceptualisations. Though some aspects of constructivism can be used to explain the historical aspects and instrumentalism explains where elites and leaders manipulate ethnicity to benefit themselves, their supporters and their groups and when ethnic conflicts can occur, the theories are unable to explain the emotions and destruction witnessed in such conflicts in Ghana with the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict being a case. The historical antecedents that culminated in the antagonism and mistrust are not explained by instrumentalism

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and are thus left out of the mechanisms to deal with these conflicts leading to the recurrence of the conflict. Therefore, the need to address these concerns by using primordialism to aid by reaching deep to unearth the deep-seated issues of identity and power to achieve transformation of the conflictual relationships.

The ethnic groups, in the bid to perpetuate themselves and keep their members satisfied, have the responsibility to protect their members and also ensure that their groups do not go extinct or any form of threat to their existence (Tonah, 2007). This needs to survive culminates in clashes over limited resources, and power contestations over legitimacy get involved in conflicts with similar groups of the kind due mainly to differences in goals and means. These conflicts are referred to as ethnic or identity conflicts (Nnoli, 1998). The use of instrumentalism, in this case, makes the conflict look only like a resource or land-related conflict and constructivism also makes it seem like a historical or identity conflict. Primordialism brings other aspects such as identity, mistrust, ancient hatreds, and the need to revenge to the fore (Tsikata & Seini, 2004). Thus, combining both primordialism and constructivism will be appropriate to discuss the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict.

Tonah and Anamzoya (2016) noted that conflicts in Africa and for that matter, Ghana emerge from single causes but assume a complex dimension with myriad triggers as it progresses due to the structure of the society. They are ethnic, resource, political, religious or chieftaincy due to their foremost nature but after a thorough examination of the conflict, one will be presented with more than one of these as a cause. For instance, a conflict may present chieftaincy succession issues as an immediate cause but after careful examination, it presents ethnic rivalry as a remote issue that may be the real reason behind the

conflict and going into it deeper, access to resources such as land, mineral or tree species for timber, and power. Access to power determines who can access and control of land and other resources lead to control over the groups within the chieftain. Resulting from the myriads of factors makes the conflicts very complex and dealing with them so nuanced and untenable.

The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict may have started as a resource conflict but has travelled various terrains including water shortage, and ethnic or identity differences which run deep in the Ghanaian context. According to Tsikata and Seini buttressed by Tonah and Anamzoya, identity in Ghana is primordial, it is assigned at birth, permanent, and is defended by members even to death.

Though the argument is that the conflict is a resource conflict because it was caused by ownership and control over a piece of land, that is not the only cause and that is why the solutions and mechanisms adopted to deal with the issue have failed. Thus, the underlying issues such as identity and power which is at the core have been relegated and are not addressed in the resolution attempts and thereby making the conflict protracted or intractable. The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict can also be said to be ethnic considering that ethnic conflicts are conflicts those conflicts where at least one group defines its goals exclusively in ethnic terms and in which the fault line of confrontation is one of ethnic variation (Williams, 2015). Thus, the groups involved define themselves by their ethnicities and conflicts that occur between groups based on ethnic variation or differences and where organised ethnic groups take recourse to the systemic use of violence for strategic gains or benefits.

The conceptualisations above established that the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict is an ethnic cum resource conflict and not just a resource conflict as

other experts have made it seem. As it stands today, the land is only a trigger for the deep-seated issues of hatred, antagonism and histories of mistrust. However, there are arguments that there is no phenomenon like ethnic conflicts (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; 2002; 1998) thereby relegating issues of identity and ethnicity and limiting the causes to only resources. There are arguments that the immediate causes of most of these conflicts are competition for resources and that considering the causes being due to resources, then such conflicts should be known and classified as resource conflicts. Chandra (2004; 2001) and Williams (2015), assert that ethnic conflicts exist and they base their assertion on the fact that these conflicts are based on ethnic differences which can be mild, medium or wide or can be manifest or latent (Agyeman, 2005).

Considering the discussions above, I state that the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict is an ethnic conflict caused by land or resource needs or better still an ethnic cum resource conflict. It was caused by land encroachment, boundary contestation, and inadequate water supply, among others. Based on this assertion, if the deep-seated cultural issues stipulated in the primordial theory are carefully and strategically addressed by digging into the culture or traditions of the groups, a converging ground can be found which can then lead to the successful transformation of the conflict for a successful and constructive relationship to be restored between the two ethnicities, the Nkonya and Alavanyo.

The Alavanyo-Nkonya Conflict in Retrospect

The Nkonya, a Guan sub-group and the Alavanyo, an Ewe sub-group are two ethnic groups that have lived side by side for centuries. History has it that the Nkonya are the indigenes of the area while the Alavanyo group are the

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settlers (see Gariba, 2017; Kendie et al., 2014; Midodzi & Jaha, 2011; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). According to the Alavanyo ethnic group, they came to the area in the sixteenth century and met the Nkonya already inhabiting the land (Tsikata & Seini, 2004). They approached the Nkonya for a landed space to live and farm on and the Nkonya consented and offered them a place to live and cultivate for their sustenance. The Nkonya corroborate this story and thus, confirm the Alavanyo as the settlers and the Nkonya as the indigenes. The first-comer claim goes to support the Nkonya as the land owners (Ahiave, 2013; Anumel, 2021; Kendie et al., 2014; Mensah et al., 2016) and both groups lived in peace after supporting and participating in the other's cultural practices (festivals and funerals), traded with each other and also intermarried (Tsikata & Seini, 2004).

The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict dates back to the early parts of the nineteenth century when the two ethnic groups or communities found themselves in a boundary dispute over a 6,300-acre piece of land. The issue started as a dispute between two individuals who had gone to fetch water from a creek during the dry season escalated out of control and became a community-wide issue and remains until today. For close to a century, the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict has proven elusive in the mechanisms deployed to end the violence. Successive governments in Ghana have made frantic efforts to resolve the conflict but without success. Commissions of enquiry, mediation teams, FBOs, NGOs, CSOs, and religious organisations have all tried to resolve the problem without success (Anumel et al., 2021; Gariba, 2017; Kendie et al., 2014; Midodzi & Jaha, 2011). The quote below from a citizen of the area captures the despair that the people find themselves in.

> For years now, blood has been pouring on that small disputed land, and citizens of the two areas are waiting anxiously for government to come

out with a permanent solution." (Leonard Yaw Gbedebu, a concerned citizen, Letter to the Ghanaian Times, 19/12/96 cited in Seini & Tsikata, 2004).

The contested piece of land is said to support timber species, diverse food crops such as cassava, plantain corn and cash crops such as cola, cocoa and coffee and minerals such as gold and clay. The conflict emerged in 1897 but the first known violent clash between the two groups took place in 1913. The next was in 1923 under the colonial government and since then the conflict has assumed some level of violence resulting in injuries, maiming, destruction of properties, mass displacement of citizens and deaths on both sides. After the 1983 clashes, the conflict has experienced a reduction in violent incidents but from 2001 to 2019, saw an increase in the number of clashes between the parties. The conflict has expanded beyond the two groups and communities into other facets of life such as the political and religious arenas where the District Chief Executive (DCE) of the area became a party in 1997, ministers of state, heads of security services, chiefs, and religious leaders among others. These were caused by claims and counterclaims of a party cutting timber in the disputed forest and also over the discovery of a large tract of Indian hemp farm on the disputed land and who owns it. These resulted in shootouts between the police and woodcutters and hemp farmers.

In 2001, armed men were felling timber in the disputed land which culminated in a shootout that resulted in the death of two people. Again, in 2003, a similar event also resulted in a shooting but with no casualties (Tsikata & Seini, 2004). The conflict has thrived on histories of mistrust and deep-seated hatred and suspicion of the other and where the political and local leaders have waded into it by thwarting histories and making the parties believe the other is

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taking advantage of them. The "we" against "them" syndrome as noted by the primordialists is a factor that the groups have capitalised on to fan the conflict and make the area ungovernable. Some parties benefit from the chaos by harvesting natural resources such as timber and selling them for profit (Connor, 1994). Over the years, several attempts have been made by state and non-state actors to resolve the conflict but to no avail.

In 2004, timber logging by some people led to clashes which witnessed destruction and deaths in the forest. The Regional Security Council (REGSEC) stepped in to mediate between the parties but it was unsuccessful. In 2012 also, rumours, suspicions and mistrust led to clashes between the parties. Again, the REGSEC stepped in to mediate peace and several meetings were held to establish durable peace. While in the process, there was an ambush killing in the disputed land in 2013 and the National Peace Council (NPC) and the Regional Peace Council (RPC) were nominated to mediate peace using local peace committees (LPCs) formed by members of both ethnic groups and the military took over the land for a government to cultivate a forest reserve. There was a period of stalemate and some form of peace which again was interrupted.

In April 2017, the Volta Regional House of Chiefs suspended the chiefs and queen mothers from the two Traditional Councils for failing to resolve the conflict. This was the result of a clash between the two ethnic communities that resulted in the death of three people on April 17, 2017, just hours after reviewing a curfew that has been in place for months (Ghanaweb.com, April 24, 2017). The two ethnicities or communities continued to attack and counter-attack each other until 2019 when the government of Ghana decided to take over the piece of land for the construction of a military training school for the Ghana Armed

Forces. The military school will also serve as a base and buffer between the two communities and contribute to finding a lasting transformation to the impasse.

After that event, peace seems to have received a boost for transformation to take place even though some violence remains as interactions are still prohibited between the parties and the parties continue to suspect each other, the tensions continue as the underlying identity, power and authority, legitimacy issues are not addressed and the stale relationship and negative constructs about each other remain. Thus, taking over the land has not resulted in changes in the issues, actors, structures and rules at individual, group, structural or cultural levels and this suggests more needs to be done, i.e. culturally-informed conflict transformation of the specific contextual issues.

Empirical Review

From the literature, unlike culture and conflict, culture and conflict resolution, or culture and conflict management, culture and conflict transformation has not been studied together and so not much exists directly in the subject. Where it has been done, it was cursorily looked at in passing by the authors and most of these studies were outside the African context. Methodologically, the studies used mixed perspectives where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to collect and analyse data. At this phase of the study, attention is turned to studies that have been conducted in the study area and see the nuances therein and highlight their relevance to the current study and also establish why this study is different.

First, I looked at culture and conflict transformation in general and second, the specifics of how the various aspects of culture and conflict transformation were used in previous studies and how they can be used here. In

all, eight empirical works by Mavalla and Osah (2017); Iloh et al, (2021); Ibrahim (2018); Hoch, Kopeček, & Baar (2017), Sardar (2001); Auvinen and Kivimäki, (2001), Kenaw, (n. d.) and finally Bukari, (2013) were chosen for review in this section.

In a study by Mavalla and Osah (2017), the authors used the ethnographic approach combined with historical studies. Their study sought to establish why the Western or Eurocentric approaches have failed to resolve conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. The study approach was qualitative, where web-based sources and observation were used. They found that the hybridisation of both Western and African methods of conflict transformation produced a successful transformation of violent protracted conflicts on the continent and promote sustainable peace. The study resulted in an expanded approach to the study of conflicts and conflict transformation, considering the multi-layered nature of conflict and the actors (citizens, civil society and government) involved.

They assert that all parties to a conflict need to be involved in finding peace at the same time. The study asserted that conflict transformation is a sure way to promote good and sustainable cordial relationships between feuding parties and this begins with changing the attitude and behaviour of the individual and then the structures. The entirety of the society and its people including leadership have to be re-oriented, and identity issues that are associated with power dynamics have to be changed (Lederach, 1998; 2014). The study in its approach did however not consider the use of primary data as it relied solely on secondary data. Primary data sources would have contributed to current views and perspectives on the issues.

In another study by Iloh et al. (2021) in Rwanda, they found that the resolution of the conflict between the disputing Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups was not the result of one party's military prowess over the other. It was instead, a culmination of an institutionalised conscious effort targeted at dealing with the root causes or original grievances that triggered the conflict. The stakeholders targeted the reformation and restoration of the relationship that existed before the conflict. Seeking peace through justice was precipitated by changes in the attitudes and behaviours of the parties and resulted in mending the relationship between the Hutu and Tutsi and the contexts that promoted the conflict. The context was set in the structures of Rwandan society. The traditional conflict transformation/resolution mechanism of *Gacaca* was employed as the main process of transformation of the sterile relationships between the parties in the aftermath of the genocide. The transformative peacebuilding method explains why the post-conflict peacebuilding process in the country has not failed two and half decades after the conflict, and the chances of violence recurring are very remote (Iloh et al, 2021).

In the Rwandan example, Iloh et al (2021) indicated that all stakeholders were also involved–government, civil society, development partners, friendly countries, armed perpetrators, victims and ordinary citizens got involved and in diverse ways, played and still play important roles in ensuring the peace project is sustained. But in the findings, the authors noted that although many aspects of Rwandan society have been transformed and women were experiencing increasing participation in peacebuilding and conflict transformative activities and saw some parity between them and men, not much has been achieved regarding improving gender relations through conflict transformation. The

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authors however believe that the transformative approach has worked in restoring sustainable peace to Rwanda by transforming destructive aspects of the conflict into constructive ones (Iloh et al., 2021).

In Ghana, conflict transformation has been applied to the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict which threatened Yendi and its environs for almost two decades. In a study by Ibrahim (2018), the author mentioned that the major approach used for the transformation of the protracted chieftaincy conflict between the Abudu and Andani gates was the Eminent Person's approach. The conflict was between two gates that rotated how they ascend the Dagbon skin (thrown) upon the death of the ruling king from one side. The eminent chiefs gave prime consideration to the traditions of the people of Dagbon and their *Gate or rotational system* of ascending the Dagbon skin or thrown as stipulated by the indigenous wholistic theory.

Ibrahim (2018) adopted a mixed method to collect primary data. Using a questionnaire, he sampled about 100 respondents within the study area. The study found that the use of the African indigenous ADR aided the conflict transformation process which suited the restructuring of the conflictual attitudes, behaviours, relationships and structures. As a result of the keen regard given to the cultures of the people, the transformation was achieved and the seventeen-year-old conflict and durable peace were restored to the Dagbon kingdom. Ibrahim recommended that conflict transformation is key to ending protracted conflicts and as it guarantees the use of the cultures of the parties.

In another qualitative study conducted by Hoch, Kopeček, & Baar in 2017, the authors concentrated on why the conflict resolution mechanisms deployed after the Cold War could not achieve peace in conflict societies and

rather made the conflicts protracted. The information from 17 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that were carefully selected through snowball sample established that the failure of the conflict resolution attempts was mostly due to the calibre (politically exposed individuals and leaders) of the people who led the peace process and how the parties suspected them of favouring their opponents. The study found that the CSOs were the preferred neutral third parties that the disputants trusted to be fair and independent referees. The study concluded that CSOs should be considered and made the mediators or negotiators in finding durable peace as established by Yahaya et al (2021) in a study of the Gonja and Nawuri ethnic groups conflict in Northern Ghana.

Another study by Sardar (2001), investigated how conflict transformation can lead to restructuring the adversarial relationship between India and Pakistan which have been involved in a violent conflict. The study used a qualitative approach to analyse both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from selected respondents and the secondary data was from published works documents. The study found a successful conflict transformation of the protracted inter-state conflict, especially when there is a transformation of rules, actors, and structures. Sardar recommends that cultural sustainability through the use of cultural practices would bring about conflict transformation. The study, however, focused on states or countries and not on intra-state groups. The role of culture and traditions were also silent in the study even though these were very relevant in the analysis.

In a study by Auvinen and Kivimäki (2001) on conflict transformation after the Apartheid era in South Africa, the authors sought to know which worked better among crisis management, dispute settlement and conflict

transformation and found that conflict transformation was better suited to dealing with the root causes of conflicts especially when the conflicts are embedded in the structures of the society and where structural reformations are needed. The study established that South Africa's case especially from the mid-1980s to the time of the study in 2001 provided a good case of successful conflict transformation in the political, and perceptual but less successful in transforming the structures of economic conflict. The traditional philosophy of *Ubuntu* was used to help reform and restructure strained relationships and structures between the races and the indigenous ethnic groups in South Africa. The study was desk research that dealt solely with secondary data sources as was the case of the study by Mavalla and Osah (2017).

Another study of conflicts between Host-Settler Conflicts in Asossa *Woreda*, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State in Ethiopia by Kenaw (n. d.). the study used a qualitative approach to sample community leaders and members for gathering primary data. The interviews suggested that the conflict was caused by economic factors such as land entitlement rights, and forest tree usage, which also resulted in cattle raiding and boundary insecurity among both communities. Both formal and customary conflict management and transformative mechanisms were used via the identification of actors, issues and structural conditions framing the general context of the conflict. The indigenous processes managed and transformed the resource-based conflicts into constructive outcomes and restored harmonious social relationships between the two communities which manifested in inter-ethnic marriage between the hosts and settlers, participation in weddings, funerals, and other community-based

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associations. Indigenous institutions contributed a lot in managing and transforming resource-based conflicts peacefully.

Several mechanisms have been suggested by academics and experts to be used in conflict transformation settings. Some instruments that have been applied for conflict transformation in several cases are interactive or problem-solving workshops that aim to transform the views and notions held by the conflict parties on specific conflict issues (Goetschel, 2009; Goetschel & Hagmann, 2009). This helps to achieve a transformation of the mutual perspectives of the conflict parties themselves. A known application of this method is the implementation of these workshops for Palestinian and Israeli participants in the 1970s and 1980s by Herbert Kelman, who asserts that his problem-solving workshops influenced the Oslo Peace Talks between the two groups positively (Kelman, 2005). But this method has not been fully successful as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still exists. A similar framework has also been used within the spheres of applied research in countries along the Nile River (Mason, 2004).

Lessons leant

It emerged from the review most of the empirical studies used either qualitative and/or mixed method research designs were mostly employed in studying issues of conflict and conflict transformation. These methods were helpful due to the quality of data needed for the analysis of issues of conflict. It is apparent that the case study design was used mostly in line with the qualitative research design. This design allowed for an in-depth examination of the conflict transformation mechanisms. The review showed that the purposive sampling technique was mostly employed as is the style for qualitative methods. That

informed this study as this was applied to select key informants: traditional authorities, municipal and district assembly officials, court personnel, CSOs, NGOs, members of the House of Chiefs, residents and security personnel for this study.

The empirical studies also showed that the authors depended very much on a desk review of secondary data sources for their studies. Others also used interviews and focus group discussions to elicit their data. This study used methods of data collection that were also predominantly in-depth face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with interviews and the focus group discussion guides as the instruments. The use of the two methods enabled triangulation in data collection to facilitate comparison and ensure the validity of the data collected. The content and thematic analysis was the predominant analysis method in all the reviews.

Conceptual Framework

In this section of the chapter, I seek to put the issues in the theories and the concepts as they relate to this work together to paint a picture of the relationships between them. This is based on the review of protracted social conflict theory, indigenous wholistic theory, conflict transformation theory and cultural sustainability theory. Figure 3 is the conceptual framework adapted for the study.
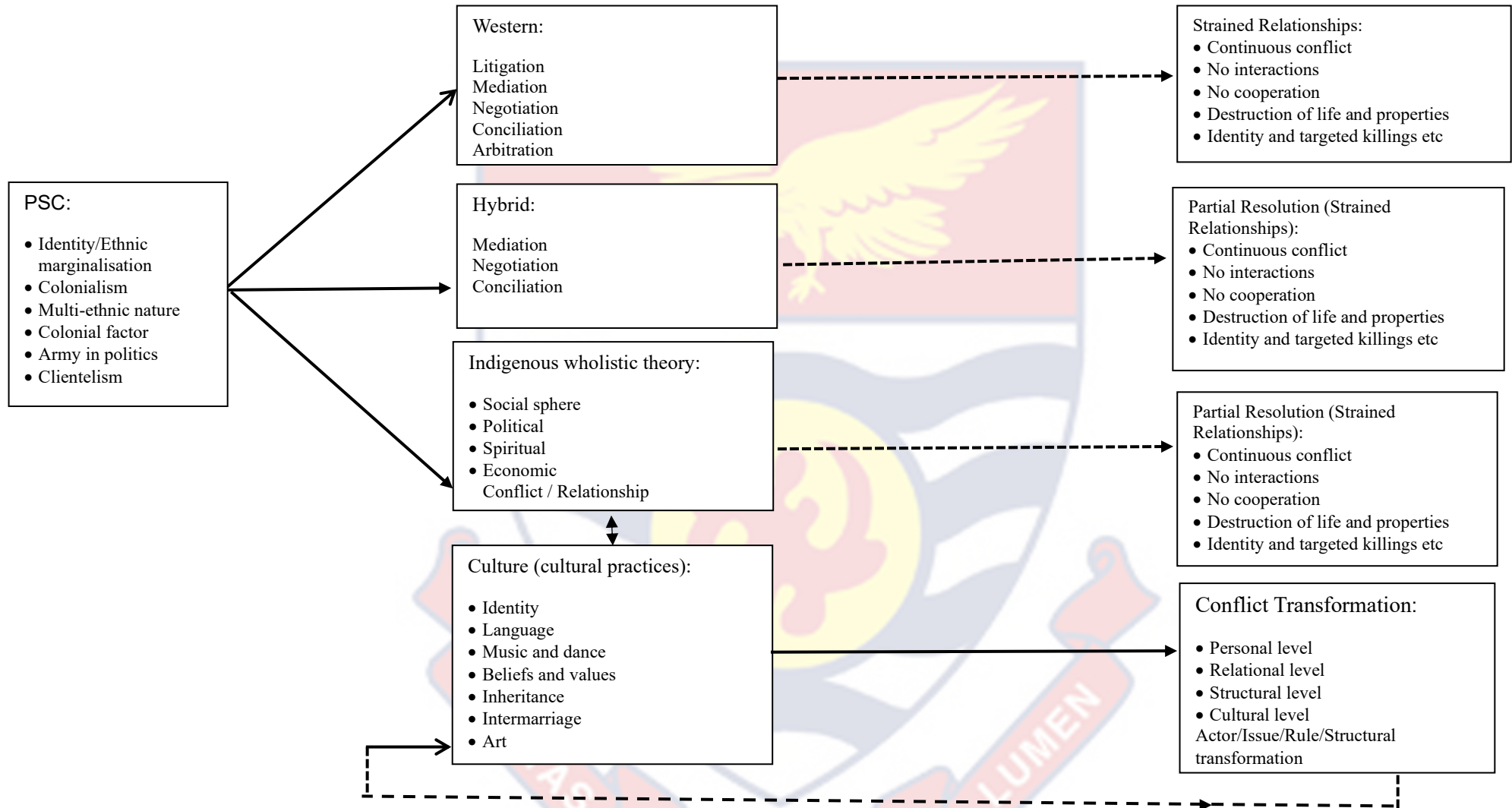
Figure 3: **Conceptual Framework**
Source: Author's construct (Adapted from Azar, 1990; Azar & Farah, 1984; Beaudoin, 2013; Absolon, 2010; 2019; Lederach, 2003; 2014; Lebaron & Lederach, 2003; Miall, 2004; Soini & Blaike, 2016)

As depicted in Figure 3, the conceptual framework speaks to the issues under consideration in this study. Conflicts originate from a myriad of causes (Azar, 1987; Galtung, 1996). The framework begins with protracted social conflicts on the left side of the various issues outlined in the PSC theory. Issues such as unequal access and marginalisation of some groups from accessing resources based on ethnic identity, colonial factor, the role of the state choosing sides in conflict situations, and clientelism among other reasons and these factors combine to result in protracted conflicts. In the upper or left part of Figure 3 (leading away from the PSC box), these issues continue to linger on and spur the conflict, especially in situations where they are left unresolved using Eurocentric conflict resolution mechanisms, where there is neglect of the cultures and traditions of the parties and mechanisms are foreign resulting in the partial resolution and protractedness of the conflict. The conflict becomes cyclical with spontaneous episodes or escalations resulting from changing triggers.

The application of a mix of methods i.e., Hybrid (middle from PSC box) also leads to inability to partial resolution producing strained relationships between the parties and making the conflict protracted. There is less interaction between the parties, the conflict is continuous and leads to the destruction of life and properties and the conflict becomes so personal and affects individual and group relationships as individuals from both sides engage in attacks and retaliatory attacks. Due to this, the parties are unwilling to dialogue or interact on any level making the restoration of peace impossible.

Moving lower away from the box on PSC to the right, from strained relationships is the application of indigenous knowledge and understanding to the conflict and the application of homegrown mechanisms which are embedded

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in the cultures of the disputing parties but were not mostly used due to European encounter. These mechanisms must focus on historical, social, spiritual, political, and economic aspects as well as on personal relationships between individuals and the groups and between groups as a whole. Although these indigenous mechanisms do achieve some level of peace according to empirical reviews conducted above. It does produce some peace. At this stage, conflict is seen as inescapable, inevitable, and an inherent part of human existence and social progress where conflicts are the results of contextual issues.

But when the indigenous mechanisms laced with the cultural practices of the parties is introduced (depicted flowing from below the box of indigenous knowledge in Figure 4), this produces a culturally-informed transmutation process where issues, actors, rules and structures, are transformed through a conflict transformation process. The CT approach relies on resources available to the groups and pre-existing relationships can be initiated by state and non-state actors and organisations such as the conflicting parties, NGOs, CSOs, local leaders, state officials, religious leaders and groups. The transformation of the conflict must take place at the personal, relational, structural and cultural levels of the society to ensure an efficient transformation.

The cultural practices therefore serve as the engine of transformation when introduced produces changes to the strained relationships that resulted from the years of conflictual relationship. The eventual way to a sustainable conflict transformation and peace is to adopt transformative ways of dealing with the contextual root causes in their respective contexts by adopting ways of redress that are embedded in the cultures of the groups to the conflict. The contextual concerns are the origin and structural causes which dovetail into identity

differences, marginalisation, colonial factor, and issues of mistrust and hatred. These serve as the basis for the actors including other interested groups who are sharply divided into identity lines. Needs and who has access and control over these are rooted in these identity and cultural markings and therefore give rise to the consideration of cultural practices for the transformation process.

The conflict transformation approach interacts with the culture where culture is used for conflict transformation. There is reverse interaction between the two spheres. The framework suggests the use of indigenous methods which suggests a shift away from the Western approaches which result in a relapse of the conflict. Thus, when cultural practices are factored into transformation processes, sustainable conflict transformation and durable peace are achieved and conflicts do not relapse and become protracted. The interaction between the conflict transformation and culture spheres leads to durable peace. With all these done, there is the tendency for conflict transformation to take place if there are conscious efforts by the parties to address the violent changes (attitudes, behaviours, institutions or structures, identities, values etc.) that have marred their relationships over the years as can be inferred from the various academics and practitioners in the field

Chapter Summary

The PSC theory was used to establish the issues that have contributed to the protractedness of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict and the modes of transformation available while the indigenous wholistic theory was also used to establish the need for indigenous knowledge built on traditions and culture of people and how these can be used for the effective transfomation of conflicts. Then culture and how it was used in this study and the practices selected for the

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transformation of the conflict were also reviewed and also, the conflict transformation approach was also reviewed and grounded to help the author explore how the approach can be used to find durable peace in the conflict-ridden communities of Alavanyo and Nkonya. Then finally, the need to mainstream the cultures of parties to conflicts, as culture is considered the engine of social change and that needs to be made a sustainable part of conflict transformation was also addressed in the chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods that were adopted to execute the entire research agenda. The interpretivist paradigm was the philosophy that was employed for the study and lends to qualitative methods of research. A qualitative case study approach was adopted together with the purposive and convenience sampling techniques that guided the selection of key informants for interviewing and the selection of others as participants for the focus group discussion. As a result, three in-depth interview guides were designed to elicit data that was mainly recorded and some field notes were made alongside while one focus group discussions (FGD) guide was designed and used to conduct five sets of discussions. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data which is mostly in words and expressed in the understandings of the key informants and participants. The chapter then ends with some ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity which were important for the study. How these processes were carried out and their justifications are laid out in the sections within the chapter.

Research Philosophy

The philosophy underpinning this study is interpretivism. Interpretivism believes that reality is multiple and relative (Creswell, 2003; Leitch, Hill & Harrison, 2010; Sarantakos, 2013). Interpretivists argue that knowledge is socially constructed and must be from the perspective of the one experiencing the phenomenon instead of being objectively determined by the researcher (Creswell, 2003).

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Unlike interpretivism, positivism is based purely on the use of numbers and on accurate measurement of reality. The philosophy believes that reality is one and can be seen from only one perspective. This is what makes it science and also since it is based on the accuracy of figures and measurements (Creswell, 2012; 2005;). To the positivist, reality is objectively determined. The third philosophy is pragmatism (Sarantakos, 2005; 2013). Pragmatism posits that there are multiple realities and these realities must be studied using different or suitable approaches to the phenomena under investigation. They combine the possible tools to study social phenomena by employing a mixed method of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. However, the phenomena under this study skew more towards the underlying assumptions of interpretivism since the study did not use any quantitative information requiring rigorous application and analysis.

Epistemologically, interpretivist philosophy lends itself to qualitative research and allows the researcher to employ data collection methods that are flexible and sensitive to the social contexts in which the data are being produced (De Villiers, 2005; Kumekpor, 2002). Study designs under this paradigm include case studies, grounded theory and ethnography. These interpretive designs lend themselves to naturalistic methods such as interviewing, focus group discussion, observation and analysis of existing texts. These methods ensure an adequate dialogue between the researchers and their participants so that together, both can construct a meaningful reality (Audi, 1995; Creswell, 2012).

This study thrives on interpretivism because it grants the researcher the chance to seek the views of informants and participants and present those views

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as determined by them (Audi, 1995). Unlike the positivist approach, where the researcher determines most of what the informants answer and preset it in figures, the interpretivist philosophy reports the views of the participants mostly in their own words. The paradigm gives the researcher the chance to stay with the participants and even partake in their day-to-day activities that will help him/her interpret the views held by the people regarding the phenomena under study (Walliman, 2006). Interpretivism argues for the subjective interpretation of reality and aims to understand and interpret the subjective meanings humans attach to their behaviour and other phenomena rather than to generalise and predict cause and effect (Walliman, 2006; Manheim, Rich, Willnart & Brians, 2006).

The interpretivist researcher emphasises understanding the motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences, which are time and context-bound (Bamberger, 2002; Neuman, 2014). Regarding this philosophy, research should focus more on understanding what has happened in a specific circumstance than on trying to predict what will happen next. This paradigm has been criticised for not being objective and unable to generalise its findings but it rather promotes subjective views which are not scientific, from the viewpoint of the positivist perspective (Sarantakos, 2005; Twumasi, 2001).

Study Design

The case study design was adopted for this research. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates an issue within its context, especially when there are blurred boundaries between phenomenon and context (Audi, 1995; Newman et al, 1998). The design allows the researcher to understand a particular person or group in their real-life context, thus, in the environment

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where the phenomenon is found. It is mostly used to understand a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon.

The case study design helped the researcher to build a holistic, largely narrative description to inform the understanding of conflict transformation using culture (Sarantakos, 2013; Twumasi, 2001). It also allows the researcher to use a variety of evidence stemming from interviews thus, a case study allows the researcher to get closer to the phenomenon under study and enables him/her to give an in-depth insight and exposure to its deep structure, enabling the right description.

The design also allowed the researcher to use evidence stemming from interviews to help hold discussions with other members of the communities and this enabled me to triangulate the information received from the key informants during the interviews. The research design also aided the researcher in dealing with several explanatory questions that needed to be answered by this research as the researcher was near the phenomena under study within the environment of the phenomena and the people who experienced it. In this study, the case study design enabled me to produce detailed descriptions of the between the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict and culturally-informed conflict transformation mechanisms using constructs to order the data and relate to earlier literature.

Yin (2003) emphasised that cases strengthen the results by replicating the patterns, thereby, increasing the robustness of the findings. Literal replications (where the cases are designed to corroborate each other) and theoretical replications (where the cases are designed to cover different theoretical conditions) are two approaches that help to establish replication logic. Since

case studies rely on analytical rather than statistical generalisations, relying on replication logic in Yin's view (2003) provides external validation to the findings.

Study Area

Though the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups were both formerly in the Volta Region and belonged to two different districts but same region before the 2019 regional demarcations by the Government of Ghana, currently, they belong to two different regions. Therefore, the study, was undertaken in the Hohoe Municipality and the Biakoye District of the Volta and Oti Regions of Ghana respectively.

The Alavanyo are an Ewe subgroup located in the Hohoe Municipality of the Volta Region. The Municipality has coordinates 7°09'5.40" N 0°28' 21.59" E. With Hohoe as the administrative capital, the municipality shares boundaries with Afadjato South District to the north, to the south with South Dayi District, Ho Municipal and Ho West District respectively, to the east with the Republic of Togo and the west with Kpando Municipal. The Nkonya are a Guan subgroup located in the Biakoye District of the Oti Region. The coordinates of the district are 00 15' E and 00 45' E and lies in latitudes are 60 45' N and 70 15' N. It borders the Hohoe Municipal Assembly and Jasikan District Assembly to the east, Kpando Municipal Assembly to the south, Kadjebi and Krachi East Districts to the North and the Volta Lake to the West. Figure 4 is the map of the districts and the study areas.

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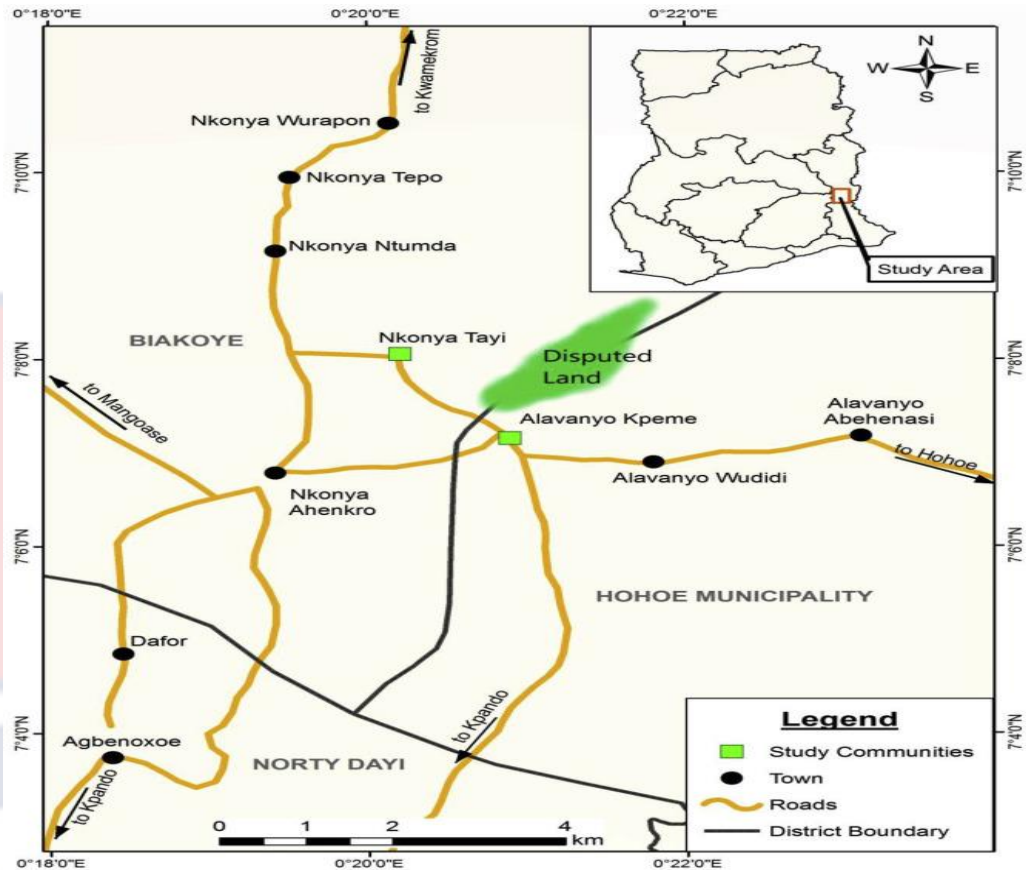
Figure 4: **Map of the Study Area**

Source: Penu & Essaw (2013).

The Alavanyo and Nkonya groups or communities are made up of many settlements (Ghana Districts.com). The communities are not homogenous due to the conflict but they have several commonalities. Alavanyo is made up of seven settlements namely; Abehenase, Agorme, Agorxoe, Deme, Dzogbedze, Kpeme, and Wudidi. The Nkonya is made up of ten settlements namely; Ahenkro, Ahodzo, Akroba, Asakyiri, Kajebi, Nchumuru, Ntumda, Tayi, Tepo and Wurupong. Alavanyo Kpeme and Nkonya Tayi are the towns or settlements of both sides that are closest to each other and form the boundary where the disputed piece of arable land between the two ethnicities is located. This was the location for the first violence in 1913 and has since remained so. The conflict has mainly been between the two settlements and has remained the scene for the

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escalations every time the ethnic groups clashed. However, at present, the conflict has extended beyond the two communities to cover the two ethnic groups in the two towns (Midodzi & Jaha, 2011; Penu & Osei-Kufuor, 2016; GIZ, 2019). However, there has not been any clash or violence in the other settlements.

The Hohoe Municipal and the Biakoye District are neighbours just as the two ethnic groups (Alavanyo and Nkonya) and the corresponding two regions, Volta and Oti. Within the same period, the intra-ethnic ethnic cum resource conflict had recorded several deaths and on average there is at least one death any time the groups experienced a violent clash (Agyei et al, 2023). The Alavanyo and Nkonya area is very viable per the guiding principle of the unsuccessful use of cultural or traditional or indigenous mechanisms in conflict transformation.

The population of Alavanyo is 9,714 citizens while the population of the Nkonya is 27,000 according to (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2021). The Alavanyo speak Ewe while the Nkonya spoke Nkonya. Members of both groups, however, spoke the language of the other due to the several of co-existing, cooperating on progress and interacting socially. Regarding religion, the Nkonya were Catholics and the Alavanyo were Evangelical Presbyterians and Global church. They, however, adhere to the tenets of the religion (gods) of their ancestors and seek spiritual meanings to occurrences, when the need arises.

In the Alavanyo-Nkonya area, before the PSC it is said the groups had a cordial relationship interacted on many levels. The residents of the area are mostly employed in the agriculture sector, as they are mostly farmers and hunters, followed by trading in farm produce in markets such as Kpando,

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Abotuase and Hohoe, teachers and civil servants follow and artisans who engage in sculpting, wood carvings, masonry among others. Before the conflict, there were high incidences of intermarriages between members of the two communities or ethnicities. There are informal jokes between the groups which suggest couples changed residences from one to the other frequently.

The values of the two groups merged and differences were not noticeable. Almost all the people from the two groups could speak the language of the other but speaking Ewe was more pronounced. Their staples and delicacies merged as they wove their lives into each other's lives. They have similar cultural adherences and exchanged gifts during celebrations such as festivals and these occasions were used to bond the groups together. They had abundant resources and both groups took advantage of the resources. Both groups consider the land as inheritance handed them by their forebears and used it to support their livelihoods which is mainly agriculture and products which they traded among themselves. Students from the other community attended school in the other before the conflict and during times of seeming peace.

Regarding language, members from the other side will not want to speak the language of the other or hear it spoken due to the conflict. However, the conflict ushered in a situation where both groups feel they have been sidelined from accessing the resources in the area, especially timber resources, land for farming resulting in dwindling agriculture output, and are not consulted in attempts being made to transform the conflict. Also, there are no interactions between the parties. Therefore, a transformation of the conflict will lead to increased interaction between members of both ethnic groups and this can lead to improved sharing of resources such as the land for farming and also help in

hunting and felling timber and harvesting cash crops such as cola to ensure sustainable livelihoods due to increases in agricultural output. Arts especially sculpture is one of the trades engaged in by the groups. These are used to communicate with residents which are either used to encourage or discourage their participation in violence or not. During peace times, these sculptures and other art forms can be used as economic ventures and used to communicate the ills of violent conflicts and how these can be shunned by way of these art forms.

A successful transformation of the conflict will not only ensure the groups live in peace with each other but treat each other as equal partners for mutual development and this enhances justice as there is equal access to the resources in the society, which is at the centre of the conflict transformation approach. Some cultural practices which are currently in place such as language have come under threat as both groups frown on members speaking the language of the other group. Thus, the Alavanyo frown on their members speaking Nkonya and the Nkonya shun speaking Ewe in their communities even though most members of the groups can speak the language of the other.

The customs and beliefs of both parties have a lot in common and due to the several years of interaction by both groups which resulted in intermarriages, their customs, beliefs and other cultural practices have led to some blend. Due to the conflict, festivals and other celebrations have been suspended as violence normally breaks out between the factions during these celebrations which leads to the destruction of properties and even death. This led to a government ban on the celebrations of both Sasadu and Yam festivals to curb any violence that can disrupt the fragile peace in the area. The Alavanyo are unable to celebrate the Sasadu festival while the Nkonya celebrates the Yam festival. and inter-

marriages currently in place are threatened. SASA is an acronym of four neighboring Ewe groups; Saviefe, Akrofu Sovie, and Alavanyo and *du* also means celebration. This name came to stand for the Yam Festival of the Alavanyo group.

Study Population

As intimated in the section on the study area, the population of Alavanyo is 9,714 citizens while that of Nkonya is 27,000 (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2021). The study population includes traditional authorities, local residents or indigenes, youth, and adversaries in the two study areas. Also, the representatives or officers of the district assemblies, the National Peace Council (NPC) and Regional Peace Council (RPC), designated officers in the corresponding Regional and District Security Councils, the Regional House of Chiefs (RHoC), and officers of the Security agencies (military and police) at study sites were part of the study population. In addition, officers in Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) such as the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and religious leaders, formed the study population.

Sampling Procedure

The study used purposive and convenience sampling techniques to select key informants and participants. Though qualitative methods have been critiqued for being judgemental and not affording equal chances to the key informants and participants, Neuman (2000) posits that using such discretion, though judgmental, provides informed units of inquiry. The technique allowed the researcher to select people who have knowledge about the phenomenon under study. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants such as the two chiefs, one assembly member from each community, two members of

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traditional councils and at least four residents each from the Alavanyo and Nkonya, two officials of the Regional Peace Council, and a member each of REGSEC and MUSEC. The purposive sampling technique was used to select these key informants due to their knowledge and experiences of the issues under study.

One official the National Peace Council was purposively selected from the national office and one from the regional office in Ho due to the intermediary role and knowledge of the conflict. One national official of WANEP, a Civil Society Organisation, that works in areas of peace, governance and security. In addition, the study purposively sampled one security coordinator from the regional municipal and district offices, and police personnel at the divisional offices were selected due to their role as enforcers of the law. A national officer of the Centre for National Culture (CNC) was also selected on the issue under study. These experts were purposively sampled based on conflict their use of various conflict-handling styles and also their past involvement in attempts at resolution. The key informants were interviewed in in-depth interview sessions.

Next, four residents each from both conflicting parties specifically from Alavanyo Kpeme and Dzogbedze and Nkonya Ahenkro and Tayi were purposively selected for interviewing. Another six each were selected through convenience sampling for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Convenience sampling was used to make it easy to gather people for the FGDs. The data was used to validate information elicited from the interviews. It improved the triangulation of the information gathered. The participants were selected based on having stayed in the community for more than 10 years and being an indigene of any of the two communities.

Considering that in qualitative studies, the emphasis is on the quality of the information gathered and not on the representative of the sample (Bamberger, 2002), 53 key informants and participants were purposively and conveniently sampled for the study. Table 1 illustrates the 23 key informants (17 males and 6 females) that were interviewed and the 30 participants in the five FGDs. Table 1 illustrates the sample sets and procedures used.

Table 1: Summary of Sample Sets and Procedures

Sampling Procedure	Category of Respondent	Data Collection Method	Sample Size
Purposive	Traditional leaders	Interview	4
	Assemblymember	Interview	2
	Security Council:		
	-Regional		2
	-Municipal		1
	-District		1
	Community residents(Alavanyo and Nkonya-2 males and 2 females each)	Interview	8
	Civil Society Organisation: -WANEP	Interview	
	-NPC (National & Regional)		1
			3
	Centre for National Culture (National)	Interview	1
Convenience	Community residents (Alavanyo-Males)	Focus Group Discussion	6
	Community residents (Nkonya-Males)	Focus Group Discussion	6
	Community residents (Alavanyo-Females)	Focus Group Discussion	6
	Community residents (Alavanyo-Females)	Focus Group Discussion	6
	Centre for National Culture Officers (Ho-Males (4) and Females (2))	Focus Group Discussion	6
Total			**53**

Source: Fieldwork (2022)

Data Sources

The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained from traditional authorities, assembly members, residents and local people of both communities, the Municipal and District Security Councils, the Regional House of Chiefs, personnel of the security agencies and other CSOs such as WANEP, NPC, NGOs and other regional and district level institutions such as the CNC in the purposively selected communities.

Data Collection Instruments

Two data collection instruments were designed for the study. These were the in-depth interview guide and the focus group discussion guide. The instruments were arranged into sections that capture the objectives of the study (see Appendices A to D).

The in-depth interview guide helped build a good rapport and created a relaxed and healthy atmosphere where key informants easily cooperated, answered questions, and allowed the researcher to clear any misapprehension about any aspect of a study. Furthermore, not all residents in the selected communities could read and write English. The interview guide enabled the interviewers to translate questions into the local languages that were spoken in the study areas. However, the use of this instrument was time-consuming due to further probing of some of the issues.

The FGD guide also afforded the researcher the chance to seek further clarifications on issues that needed in-depth clarification from the participants and vice versa. The FGDs allowed for reliability as the responses were checked and corrected by other respondents if the respondent gets information wrong. The in-depth but informal nature allowed a free and relaxed environment that

made the participants respond to issues.

Data Collection Methods

Two data collection methods used were employed in consonance with the qualitative nature of the phenomena under study. These are interviews and FGDs. Interviewing was the major data collection method in this study. It was a useful way of collecting qualitative data as it allows key informants and participants to report on themselves, their views, beliefs, practices, interactions, and concerns (Creswell, 2014; Sarantakos, 2013).

According to Mavellas, Wellington and Samuel (2015), interviews provide a cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people. All interviewees who could read were given copies of the interview schedule to study whereas the research team explained the research to those who could not read before the interview is conducted. This helped in facilitating interaction between the interviewer (me or field assistants) and the key informants who were allowed to choose the time, date and venue in order not to disrupt their normal schedules. To validate the interviews for the study, all interviews were recorded except those who objected to the recording due to reasons citing safety and security reasons. The recordings were vividly transcribed after the fieldwork.

The interview technique helped to obtain data from some stakeholder groups in the study. These are traditional authorities, the officials of the three district assemblies and the National and Regional Peace Councils, Security Personnel (military and police) at study sites, WANEP, and the National CNC. Some advantages associated with the use of interviewing include the opportunity to observe the non-verbal behaviour of key informants and

participants and to ensure completeness (Mavellas et al, 2015). It also ensured a high response rate as it is easy to administer. The duration of the interview was one hour.

Focus Group Discussion was the second method used to collect the data for this research. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005) stated that a focus group discussion is a form of group interview which focuses on the interaction within the group that discusses a topic supplied by the researchers. Hence, the participants (residents and local leaders of both communities) interact with each other rather than with the interviewer, so the interaction forms the data. The issues were introduced in an interactive group setting where participants in both Alavanyo and Nkonya were free to talk with other group members about the issue without fear after setting some ground rules governing the FGD. In the FGDs, this research took a keen interest in how people respond to each other's views to derive some conclusions from the group interactions (Creswell, 2003; 2014).

The FGD helped this researcher to understand the attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions of people towards the conflict and how this could be influenced by culture (Newman et al, 1998; Sarantakos, 2005). Two focus group discussions each (men and women) were organised in the two settlements of Alavanyo Kpeme and Nkonya Ahenkro. The FGDs could not be held in Nkonya Tayi. The chiefs assigned security reasons for which the FGDs and interviews could not be held in Nkonya Tayi at the time of the study. The sub-chiefs and people moved to Nkonya Ahenkro for the data collection. Here the participants who were conveniently selected from communities that were purposively selected due to their experience of the conflict.

In Alavanyo and Nkonya, each FGD was made up of six participants of the same gender but of different ages but were all married with children. Regarding employment, they were in the formal and informal sectors. Some were traders while others were farmers, retirees, hunters, teachers and artisans. They, however, shared common experiences when it comes to age-old conflict and shared cultural backgrounds. Based on these, five sets of FGDs were organised to elicit information from the participants who were selected for the study. Four were organised in the study communities of Alavanyo and Nkonya; one all-male set of six participants and one female set of six participants each. One discussion was held with seven officers of the regional office of the Centre for National Culture (CNC), in Ho. Unfortunately, the Oti region did not have an office for the CNC and the Peace Council at the time, so there were no FGDs.

Participants were assigned numbers, from one to six. The participants sat in a horse-shoe style with the interviewer standing in front of them and a topic is introduced, sometimes in statements and others in questions and they shared their views in turns on the issues. Their responses were recorded using electronic recorders and stored for transcription which was done after the sessions. The duration of an FGD was one hour and 45 minutes.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork was done in two phases. This was because not all the key informants were available during the first phase. The second phase afforded the research team to go back and meet some of the key informants with others still not available. The fieldwork or primary data were collected within the three weeks between April 25-May 19. This was after the ethical clearance was given to me on April 22, 2022 by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the

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University of Cape Coast. As part of the community entry procedure, the principal researcher first visited the Volta and Oti Regional offices in Ho and Dambai respectively, to announce our presence within the region and then to the Municipal Office in Hohoe where Alavanyo is located and the Biakoye District office where Nkonya is also located.

Fieldwork began after I received ethical clearance by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and an introductory letter was also taken from the Department of Integrated Studies, UCC to be presented to the various offices and individuals to be interviewed for the study. As part of the community entry procedure, the principal researcher first visited the Volta and Oti Regional offices in Ho and Dambai respectively, to announce our presence within the region and then to the Hohoe Municipal Assembly Offices where Alavanyo is located and the Biakoye District offices where Nkonya belong. The researcher and field assistants settled in Kpando and visited the study areas in Nkonya, Hohoe, Alavanyo and Ho. The team stayed in Accra to conduct interviews there as well. We then went to the Chiefs and people of Alavanyo and Nkonya to present ourselves and our purpose and were received and permitted to embark on the fieldwork.

In all, five FGDs were conducted for the study. In Alavanyo, two were conducted; one for males and another for females and the same was done for Nkonya. Another one (mixed-gendered) was conducted in Ho for the officers of the CNC. The research team met the officers after a meeting and though the initial plan was to conduct interviews with two officers, it turned into a group discussion. I started the interview with the director but the others participated in

giving their responses to the questions. That changed the one-on-one interview into an FGD due to the officers numbering six (four males and two females).

The in-depth interviews were conducted in Ho, Hohoe, Alavanyo, Nkonya and Accra. Three interviews were conducted in Ho. There were several attempts to get court officials of the courts in Ho and members of the Regional House of Chiefs in Ho for interviews without success. In Hohoe, two in-depth interviews were conducted but the key informants refused to be recorded due to their positions. There were three interviews in Accra. Also, seven interviews each were conducted in the study communities of Alavanyo and Nkonya.

The research team, however, encountered some challenges during the fieldwork. As a result of many researchers evading the privacy of residents of both communities most of the time, the residents were unwilling to participate in research regarding the conflict. Those who expressed the willingness to take part also demanded payments for their time and participation. As a result, many international and local NGOs and CSOs have induced them with money to participate in their research. Most residents demanded between GHS100 and GHS 300 before partaking in the study and since I could not pay them the requested amounts, some of them refused to grant interviews to the researcher and his team.

Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves structuring large and complex interview data into a presentable and communicable framework for the reader (Kvale, 1996; Lindsey, 1997; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 2000; 2014). Baxter (2003) enumerated seven methodological procedures that have to be taken to analyse qualitative data. These include data collection, coding, memoing,

exploration, distillation, theoretical development, and finally, theoretical representation. The researcher followed Baxters' recommended procedures in the analysis of the data elicited from the key informants and participants.

Data collected from the field were first cross-checked, cleaned and edited to ensure that responses for each interview question on the interview guide were obtained and the same applies to the focus group discussion guides. That ensured that the information provided by participants was relevant to questions on the instruments. Electronic recorders were used to record the interviews that key informants and participants allowed me to record.

The data were coded and analysed manually. Versus coding and analysis were used to analyse the data since the study was about two groups and there was the need to compare some of the responses and discuss them. This made it easy to use relevant direct quotes or expressions and then analyse them. The audio recordings of the interviews and the focus group discussion were transcribed and categorised under specific themes and used for the analysis. Thematic analysis was the analysis method used. This is where the data was analysed using various themes that emerged from the data. Data was presented using the narratives of the participants in the analysis section of the research.

Ethical Considerations

No matter the form it takes, research meddle into the privacy of its key informants and participants. Due to this, the researcher took the privacy and emotions of the key informants and participants into consideration and respected them through the data collection phase of the study. The issues under study are also deemed sensitive and therefore, great care must be taken. According to Smyth and Robinson (2001), ethical challenges for researchers are

crucial when dealing with "victims of conflict". Conflict is the theme of this project, therefore, there is a need to hold ethical issues high.

Before embarking on the data collection, I obtained ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Cape Coast on April 22, 2022, to enable me to collect the needed data. I also obtained a letter of introduction from my department, the Department of Integrated Development Studies which spelt out the purpose of the study, the need for individual participants' anonymity as well as confidentiality regarding their responses and their participation in the study. The willingness, confidentiality and anonymity of the key informants and participants were respected. Any information that can identify a participant including names, addresses, and telephone numbers was avoided in the interviews to ensure the anonymity of participants. Permission was obtained from the two District Assemblies, the Municipal and District Security Council (MUSEC/DISEC), chiefs and elders of the study areas before the fieldwork was undertaken. After establishing the necessary contacts with the officers of the selected offices and communities, permission was also sought for the interviews and FGDs to be conducted.

These research assistants were trained on how to talk and how to explain certain difficult questions to key informants and participants and other equally important information that enabled the researcher and research assistants to have uniform information. The researcher and research assistants introduced themselves to the key informants and participants to avoid impersonation and doubts. Also, the purpose of the study and the nature of the information being sought will be made known to the administrators and key informants and participants of the study areas.

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Reflexivity and Positionality

I have never been a victim or survivor of any direct violence at any point in my life nor been involved in any such violent outbursts. However, I grew up in Akosombo, Ghana which is a community next to two ethnic groups that were involved in a violent clash in 1989. As a child, I witnessed the effects of the violent clashes between the Akwamu of Akwamufie in the Asuogyaman District and the Dorfor (Tongu) (see Ametefe, 2013; Aikins & Ametefe, 2017; Ametefe, Imoro & Aikins, 2021). This experience, combined with several other reasons, such as the abuse of human rights by people with guns, the human displacement that happens during violent outbursts and wars, and the devastation that is left in the aftermath of conflicts have combined and culminated in my interest in conflict and their management, peacebuilding and transformation, which are approaches aimed at reducing the effects of violence and their occurrence.

This researcher shares a common background as an Ewe with the Alavanyo ethnic group but does not belong to the group nor does he hail from the group or the area. I come from the Tongu sub-group of the Ewe group and I speak Ewe which is similar to the language of the Alavanyo and which some members of the Nkonya can also speak. While the Nkonya speak the Nkonya language, they also speak Twi or Akan fluently which the researcher and members of the research team also spoke. That was to my advantage because Twumasi's (2001) criterion of an insider researcher was that the researcher must understand the language and identify with the aspirations and worldview of the local people.

Even though Alvesson (2003) has questioned the emotional detachment and objectivity of insider researchers, Brannick and Coghlan (2007) argued that

strict compliance with scientific procedure and self-discipline are adequate to overcome these pitfalls, which this researcher has worked very hard to ensure. I remained as neutral as possible regarding the issues under study and as I followed the scientific procedures stipulated for such a qualitative study.

Limitations of the Study

The study faced some limitations. Due to the sensitive nature of the phenomenon under study, the researcher was unable to access some of the key informants and participants who were purposively selected to make up the targeted population earmarked for the study. Residents in the study area were also unwilling to talk to the research team since both sides of the conflict do not trust third parties and researchers. These may affect the responses that those who agreed to participate gave as they were not highly motivated to.

Finally, this study is limited to the study area, therefore the data can only be applied to the area under study. Due to this fact, the study cannot be generalised to other areas with similar social problems.

Chapter Summary

The study hinged on interpretivism and how it allowed for qualitative data to be collected, presented and analysed. The case study design was used for this study. The Hohoe Municipal and the Biakoye District were selected for the study due to the protracted conflict between the Alavanyo and Nkonya respectively. Purposive and convenience sampling were used to select 23 key informants and 30 participants for five FGDs respectively. The interview and FGDs were the instruments for data collection. The data collection took place between April and May 2022. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data and the data was presented in words and discussed simultaneously.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CURRENT STATE OF THE ALAVANYO-NKONYA CONFLICT

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the first objective of the study which is to examine the current state of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. So much has been done regarding the conflict and the causes and the mechanisms that were used to resolve the conflict and the failures of the mechanisms to end the conflict since the conflict has been mostly treated as a resource conflict (see Agyei et al., 2023; Ahiave, 2013; Anumel et al, 2021; Duah, 2014; Gariba, 2017; 2023; Kendie et al, 2014; Midodzi & Imoro, 2011; Tonah, 2007; GIZ, 2019). Therefore, the researcher addressed the issue of the current state of the conflict, the reasons for the protractedness of the conflict with regards to issues of identity (ethnic) and legitimacy and how the two ethnic groups determine their place and formed their identities. First, I take a cursory look at the history of both groups by looking at how they got to their present homes, and the causes and course of the conflict.

History of the Ethnic Groups and Course of the Conflict

The groups under study can be classified as ethnic groups as the members identify with common ancestry and consider themselves to be different and are so considered by others to be different (Agyeman, 2008; Giddens, 2009; Nnoli, 1998). The two groups have the power to protect and safeguard the rights of their members. As a result, an injury to one person or a group of individuals from any of the two sides was met with a more violent and destructive counter-attack from the victim group (Ateng et al., 2018; Ramsbotham et al., 2017). Ramsbotham et al held the view in high end cultures, where the members consider each other family and due to a common ancestry and certain

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commonalities which makes them consider an injustice to one as affront to all and the fact that the groups are closely knitted that they consider defending their members as the core task for which the group exists, unlike in a low-end culture found mostly in the West (Ramsbotham et al, 2017). This confirms Bates' (1980) conceptualisation of the ethnic group as a coalition that is formed to secure gains in the competition for limited resources and distribute such to members.

In the KIIs and FGDs in both communities, the key informants were asked about the movement of their groups to their present homes. They were also asked about the current state of the conflict between Alavanyo and Nkonya and to possibly assign a number on a scale of 0 to 10 (with zero being no conflict and 10 the presence of violent conflict) during the KII sessions and varying responses were received. The key informant, a Linguist and historian narrated the following to indicate their migration to their present home:

> The name 'Nkonya' sounds like a Twi name. Our forefathers made us know that, we were from Nyasaland, thus, modern Kenya. Our forefathers were tough. They don't stay at a place for long. So, when they got to Ghana, the then Gold Coast from Kenya, they came to Labadi, Accra. This was before the whites came. From there they moved to Senchigba close to the Adome bridge... then to Akwamufie and then to Anum, where they stayed before coming to our current location. So, when they settled here in the 14th century, the major occupation was farming and hunting. We were one of the first people to settle in the Volta-Oti zone. (Interview with a Linguist and historian, male, 28th April 2022, Nkonya).

Also, a key informant from Alavanyo narrated their history regarding their migration to their present home and how they coexisted with the Nkonya

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for over a century before the violence broke and marred their cordial relationship. He narrated that:

> The Alavanyo are a group of people of Notsie under the rule of the tyrannical King Agorkorli. As a result of misunderstandings among the people, some of our people left there and were led by a chief named Torgbi Ehe. He led them through the journey to a place called Akroful Heviofe where he died. After his death, some of the people remained there and others continued to Saviefe and some moved on due to population increase. They were led by Torgbi Tsredatsu, a fetish priest, to Sovie, and then Torgbi Toh and his children led another group to Kpando. On reaching Kpando, Torgbi Toh asked if they could get a place to settle ahead and whether there were people there. So, they built a town there, which is named Alavanyo Agorme Deme, Dzogbedze, Kpeme, Wudidi, Agorxive, Agorxoeand Abehenasi… So, Abehenasi is the town that Torgbi Toh led us to finally (Interview with a Sub-Chief and historian, male, 29th April 2022, Alavanyo).

The narratives of the key informants from Nkonya and Alavanyo suggest that Alavanyo, led by *Torgbi Toh* to their present home, sought permission from *Nana Okoto,* chief of the Nkonya at the time, who in consultation with his traditional council granted the Alavanyo a piece of land for settlement and farming. The responses of the key informants from both leaders from the groups support the claim that both groups just as most groups in Ghana moved from different places at different times in history to their present locations or homes.

The oral history and responses from the KIIs, interviews with residents and supported by the FGDs indicate that both groups migrated from different places to the present location. The Alavanyo history confirms the Nkonya were the first to occupy the area before the arrival of the Alavanyo in the sixteenth century. According to the oral history of the Nkonya, they hailed from

Nyasaland in modern-day Kenya and continued their movement westwards to their present home while the Alavanyo, like other Ewe groups in Ghana, came from *Notsie* in present-day Togo during the tyrannical reign of King Agorkorli and continued westwards to their current home of Alavanyo.

The narratives suggest that the Nkonya were the first to arrive at the location and ushered the Alavanyo, the latecomers, to the area. Boahen (1966) noted that all groups in Ghana migrated from elsewhere to their present location. Other factors that could be used to determine the early arrivals from the later arrivals include the types of occupation and language infiltration and how they are spoken are some ways to determine this. This was corroborated by the data from an FGD that was conducted in Nkonya. The participants enumerated that they arrived at the location before the people of Kpando, Alavanyo and Hohoe later came to settle around them. They asserted that the people of Alavanyo later arrived from Sovie to join them in the current location after the Nkonya did.

The narratives support the view that the Nkonya were present before the Alavanyo arrived. These early and late arrival issues and differences in ethnic backgrounds of the groups combined to produce issues of group differences boundary and land demarcation between the two groups. The boundary between the two ethnic groups came under contention and has stayed as a crucial issue in the conflict. The quotation from an interview with a key informant below in Alavanyo establishes the traditional boundary as follows:

> Our ancestors indeed sought permission [from the Nkonya] to be on that land which was not inhabited at the time. Our ancestors and their ancestors together even planted Anya trees to demarcate our lands. This means there was a mutual understanding between them and there are boundaries for both towns, from the towns to the bush, through to towns like Kpando, Lolobi and Santrokofi. This means

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that between all these towns, there were mutual understandings that existed between them, so they live in peace. Why is it that we are having it difficult to live in peace with the Nkonya? (Interview with a sub-chief, male, 27th April 2022, Alavanyo).

The response also mentions the planting of trees for boundary-making. The Alavanyo call the tree species *Anya* while the Nkonya calls it *Ntomeh* were planted by the ancestors of both groups and which was used as the boundary marker between the two ethnicities or communities. The boundary, however, experienced encroachment due to population growth and the need for more land. These encroachers, according to the Nkonya were the Alavanyo while the Alavanyo do not know where the encroachment was and both sides have and continue to blame each other. The boundary according to oral history followed the traditional mode of boundary making where the two groups together planted the tree species on the agreed boundary. However, the Nkonya have questioned this boundary believing the Alavanyo want to use this to take more land they agreed on. The Nkonya on the other hand have subscribed to the Gruner map drawn in 1913 by the German colonial government.

The quotation points to the first cause of the conflict between the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups. Thus, it is land boundary contestation which also confirms land as the first cause of the conflict. As noted by Gariba (2023), land is the basis for political, identity, economic and financial placement in Ghana and thus, it is found in most conflicts that have dotted the country. The need for more space created competition between the groups over the piece of land that borders the groups (Agyei et al., 2023). As indicated in Azar's (1990) conceptualisation, PSCs result from competition over limited resources, as a

result of differences where some are sidelined based on their identity can lead to conflicts.

Considering that the groups define their differences in ancestry and they seek ways to meet their different needs and therefore the competition for limited resources. The land on which both groups find themselves is a major resource from which they both derived their livelihoods and deprivation of access has repercussions for peace and security. This also confirms the protractedness of the conflict as livelihoods are at stake if the land is taken from one of the groups (Burton, 1991; Connor, 1994; Gurr, 1970). As enumerated in the previous narrations, the groups were predominantly farmers and hunters and land provided the means for sustenance. Due to this, the groups were not ready to allow their livelihoods to be taken away from them. There were also plant species used for medications as well. The groups identified themselves differently, with the same goals but different means.

The two groups, in the narrations, have based their group and identity formations on their ancestry and by extension, resulting in the majority and minority group formation as the primordialists and contructivists have established regarding ethnicity. The formation of their respective identities along ethnic lines is made permanent as postulated by primordial theory and this, together with the histories is handed to the next generation via socialisation (Chandra, 2001; Flesken, 2014; Geertz, 1973; Horowitz, 1985; McDoom, 2011). This is shown in their language, values, customs, traditions and ancestors whom they hold high. The groups consider the other to be different and an out-group and are so considered based on these differences. This finally culminated

in issues of domination, where the Nkonya wants to be recognised as the dominant group and accorded the right as the overlords of the place.

The situation above confirms the existence of divisions between the groups, which are explained by the natural 'ties' known as 'ancient hatreds' (Weir, 2012). Primordialism, according to Weir, posits that ethnicity is the product of ancient hatred and mistrust between different ethnic groups which is etched into their histories. Ethnic conflicts stem naturally and inevitably from these ancient hatreds that characterises the relationship between the groups.

However, the Alavanyo have contested that domination is not a characteristic of the relationship, which tends to suggest that the two ethnicities may want to consider themselves equal partners. However, the first- or late-comer claims from both the Alavanyo and Nkonya support the Nkonya as the first to arrive in the area and who based on them being the first to arrive, adduce the right and authority to decide who can access what and when based on these claims.

Bates (1980), notes that ethnicity is volatile and conflictual but an important social need required for individual and group survival. Ethnic plural societies, according to Giddens (1989) are made up of several distinct but large ethnic groupings, that compete in the same political and economic order. As noted by participants in an FGD in Nkonya, they, the Nkonya do not like to be ruled, but like to be in control of people and things that belong to them. They will not sit and allow other people to take what belongs to them away from them as they will defend whatever is theirs. As indicated in Beaudoin's (2013) conceptualisation of PSC, the competition for limited resources in most cases

results in some groups being sidelined based on their identity and this can lead to conflicts.

Considering that the groups define their differences in ancestry and they seek ways to meet their different needs and therefore the competition for limited resources. Since ethnic groups are large associations that seek the benefits and the satisfaction of the needs of their people, they clash in these strides with other groups seeking the same benefits of the limited resources. They also rise to defend their own and will do all it takes to meet this mandate including, injuring and annihilating their opposition (Coser, 1956; 1998) or threats to their survival. This also confirms the conceptualisation by Bates (1980) that ethnic groups are political coalitions that defend their kind and also distribute resources to them. In the situation where any of them is deprived, it is considered an indictment on the group and so they will defend any member who is threatened by members of other groups. The Nkonya group are not ready to be controlled by the Alavanyo especially when they consider themselves as the legitimate owners of the area and who are the custodians and owners of the land in dispute.

All human groups have the right to self-determination and existence. The need to safeguard these rights is paramount to the members (Azar, 1978; 1990). Azar noted this phenomenon while studying protracted conflicts and especially in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is a conflict over land and boundaries and also regarding the issue of inheritance. The Nkonya also consider this piece of land as an inheritance that was bequeathed to them by their ancestors and for that reason, they have no intention to let it be taken by another group. Therefore, the Nkonya and Alavanyo are ready to defend their existence and thus their inheritance (Azar, 1990; Chandra, 2004: Horowitz, 1985). That also confirms the

current state of the conflict to be in a stalemate. This confirms a finding by Asare (2023) as a reason for the protractedness of the conflict.

Concerning the relationship between the two ethnicities, it was very cordial before the violent outbursts in 1923. Members of both ethnic groups intermarried, lived in both areas, engaged in farming and traded together (Ahiave, 2013; Midodzi & Imoro, 2011; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). The cordiality is typified by the exchange of gifts during the celebration of their respective festivals.

> Our people gave them land at that place to prevent slave raiders and traders from getting to us. So, when they came, they paid homage to our paramount chief every year with a ram, palm wine and fresh yam. This was because of the land we gave them (Interview with a Chief, male, 29th April 2022, Nkonya).

The people of Alavanyo before the violent clash of 1983, participated in the Yam festival celebration of the Nkonya and always presented fresh yam and other items to the Nkonya during the yam festival of the Nkonya as a friendly gesture. This gesture was considered by the Nkonya as payment of homage to them whilst the Alavanyo do not consider this as payment of homage. The Alavanyo also celebrated the Sasadu Festival which they celebrate with their brothers from Saviefe, Akrofu and Sovie. The Nkonya also participated in the Sasadu and reciprocated the gesture of goodwill by the Alavanyo by presenting gifts to the chiefs and people of Alavanyo during the festivities. This stopped after further clashes between the groups where the Alavanyo ended the exchange of gifts between the Alavanyo and Nkonya during the festival celebrations.

However, due to the protracted nature of the conflict, both groups no longer partake in the celebrations of the other. The relationship between the groups is strained. The Nkonya considered the stoppage of the payment of homage as defiance of their authority and hence, decided to stop sending gifts to the Alavanyo as well. During an interview, a key informant stated:

> In 1923, they stopped paying homage to our paramount chief. When one of our children was sent there to demand for the reasons, there was a scuffle between them and he returned. It was because of sending this native of our land to remind and demand them to pay homage to our chief in 1923 that sparked the war in 1923 (Interview with a Chief, male, 29th April 2022, Nkonya).

The history of the two ethnic groups was a history of peaceful co-existence laced with trust, interdependency and brotherliness depicted by intermarriages and gift exchanges between both ethnicities until 1897 when boundary encroachment and demarcation issues came up. This destabilised the relationship between the people due to the need for land for settlement and sustenance resulting from the rise in population. A major glitch in 1923 occurred during the Empire Day celebration under British colonialists when things escalated into a fully-blown violent encounter between the two groups that which produced casualties. A key informant narrated:

> I think the relationship…let me say it dates back to over 100 years ago when the two sides lived peacefully. As history tells us, they lived together for some time, but a piece of land became an issue of contention between the two ethnic groups. And that has severed their relationship in other sense and sometimes it comes down and sometimes it heats up. The other interesting thing about the relationship between the two ethnic groups is… regardless of all the issues or the so-called conflict between them, there are still

intermarriages between the people… (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 17th May 2022, Accra).

As illustrated by the quote above, this key respondent does not think the firstcomer issues as determinants of majority and minority group designations and ownership of the land resource in the area should not remain relevant in determining who controls the area and who is subordinate in the current Ghanaian dispensation. They think it is about time they let go of these claims and instead both groups consider each other as equal partners in development and not allow such issues to derail the efforts being made by the state to keep all parties together in the bid to promote diversity as a rich cultural experience for all. They mention the fact that both ethnicities came from elsewhere and occupied the area, therefore, must relegate the issues of the firstcomer as a basis to establish power and control. This finding confirms findings made by earlier researchers who studied the conflict (see Anumel, 2021; Asare, 2023; Duah, 2014; Gariba, 2017; Mensah et al, 2016).

Azar (1987) asserted that there was need to balance the imbalances in power between disputing parties so as to regard each other as equal partners in development in situations of protracted conflicts. Balance in power dynamics between the parties is needed for an effective transformation to be achieved (Dudouet, 2008). This will ensure that one party does not dominate the other as noted at the genesis stage which can be due to the colonial factor and the multi-communal nature of the area. A key informant said the following when asked about firstcomer or latecomer stories:

> That's a bit difficult to say because if you look at the Nkonya and the Alavanyo, none of them is at the original place, they both migrated from outside that area… But as to who came there first,

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according to the oral tradition, the Alavanyo were asked to provide some security tasks for the Nkonya and then they were allowed to settle there for the work they did for the Nkonya. They fought some wars for the Nkonya and so they were allowed to also settle there as payment or rewards for the services rendered. But the Nkonya, at the moment, are now saying 'You have outlived your usefulness, we want you to leave'. The Nkonya are demanding their land. (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 17th May 2022, Accra).

From this response, this key informant does not consider firstcomer or latecomer stories as an important feature of the peacemaking attempts. Key informants like this fall into categories of interveners and may be selected as neutral third parties to lead peacemaking interventions such as negotiation or mediation to restore durable peace between the conflicting parties. However, these neutral third parties do not consider the first-comer stories and associated majority-minority group relations as an important issue, which can have a consequence for transformation. This development may be accountable for the protracted nature of the conflict since these neutral parties do not share these views and the innate value of such an important concern of the parties.

These stories and the part that deals with the payment of homage (or gift exchange) hold intrinsic cultural values for the groups involved (Bukari, 2013; Duah, 2014). This supports the primordialist and constructivist assertions of how ethnic markers come about, mainly through histories of ancestry and constructions of suspicion and mistrust (Chandra, 2012; Flesken, 2014; McDoom, 2011). This, however, confirms the view held by others that the neutral third parties that are selected must know and understand the culture (i.e., values, traditions and their meanings) of the conflicting parties and call for the selection of third parties with knowledge of the cultures of the disputing parties

to lead the transformation effort (Ahiave, 2013; Ametewee, 2007; Anumel et al., 2021; Asare, 2023; Ateng et al., 2018; Bukari, 2013; Duah, 2014; Ibrahim, 2018; Jönsson, 2007; Issifu & Bukari, 2022; Maeise, 2003; Tonah, 2007; 2012).

There is a growing body of thought that is questioning the existence of identity formation and authority derived based on first-comer stories, especially by proponents of Western or Eurocentric conflict resolution mechanisms such as the courts who base their modes on evidence and land title documents which, not every person or group has. The identity of ethnic groups such as the Alavanyo and Nkonya at this stage of their existence should not be based on firstcomer or latecomer issues since both groups migrated from other places to settle in the area. This throws the legitimacy claims or otherwise and indigene-settler relationships into disrepute and needs further examination. This produces identity-based conflicts which are the types that become protracted (Kriegsberg, 1973). Some KIIs and FGDs with residents in both communities, however, did not suggest that the firstcomer stories should be relegated.

The role of the colonial factor or legacies noted at the genesis stage by Azar (1990) in the PSC theory features deeply in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. The German government sidelined the existing boundaries in 1913 and tasked Hans Gruner to map (Plate 1) the area and this was also done at the blind side of the Alavanyo. Another key informant, a MUSEC representative also narrates:

> The land was re-demarcated by the government and the Alavanyo land was divided into three and two were given to them and one part was added to the Nkonya. This was based on the Gruner map and the Alavanyo refused to allow their land to be taken by the Nkonya with a map that they [the Alavanyo] do not trust since they were not involved in the mapping process (Interview with a MUSEC representative, male, 8th May 2022, Hohoe).

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The quotation above by the MUSEC representative suggests the Alavanyo were oblivious of the existence of the Gruner map until after the clashes in 1923, although the map was sketched in 1913. The Nkonya, Bowiri, Akpafu, Hohoe and Kpando seem to know about the map and made their inputs. The Alavanyo feel they were not treated well since they were not involved in the mapping process. Therefore, their rejection of the use of the map as evidence for ending the conflict since the new boundaries reduce their land size, although the government also used the map to engage in re-demarcating the land between the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups. The rejection of these resolutions results in the recurrence of the conflict (Agyei et al., (2023).A youth leader from Nkonya also narrated as follows:

> The 1923 clashes ended because we still had enough land even after giving them the land they lived on. Because they came and traded with us and there was understanding. Sixty years after the war, that was 1983 there was another war due to the water shortages in the area due to the drought of 1983. When our people went to fetch water at a stream in Alavanyo due to shortage of water. They insisted that they fetched before our people do because the stream is on their land. Our people did not agree since we gave them the land and they fought. Our king sent people to resolve the issue and they attacked our people which resulted in the clashes of 1983 (Interview with a youth leader, male, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

Another key informant narrated the following during an interview concerning the boundary.

> A time came when the need for land for farming led to encroachments. So, when Gruner came to map the land, we had 6 nation states that included Bowiri, Gbi, Santrokofi, Akpafu, Alavanyo and Nkonya. This Gruner map has been used by all six

traditional areas and decisions based on it are binding by law. The encroachment led to misunderstandings and clashes between Nkonya and Alavanyo. The issue was sent to court and after six different judgements, with all the judgements in favour of the Nkonya yet the Alavanyo refused to accept the judgements. We have documents from the law court which we show those who come to research this conflict. The clashes continued but the bloodiest one was in 1983 (Interview with a resident, male, 11th May 2022, Nkonya).

Also, during an FGD in Alavanyo, the participants supported the view of the Gruner map being presented in court to support the position of the Nkonya while the Alavanyo are opposed to the map as evidence in court citing wrong boundary the demarcations between the two groups as mentioned earlier in the section. During a court proceeding, Dr Gruner stated that six groups resided on the land and they had disagreements, so he sketched the map. The FGD suggested that Gunner admitted that it was not a map but a sketch he just made. This led to the rejection of the map as it could not be used to resolve the boundary issue between the Santrokofi and Akpafu people. The Alavanyo added that an earlier meeting with them and the Nkonya was not for creating a boundary between them but was for addressing misunderstanding with people.

According to the Alavanyo, the Nkonya however decided to use this map to claim ownership over the piece of land. The Alavanyo believed the map resulted in the people of Nkonya attacking their chief's (Torgbi Atakora III) palace on Empire Day in 1923, as the chief was preparing for the celebration. The Nkonya came with Anya that the Alavanyo chief should make them go and build a boundary. Torgbi Atakora III then asked where the Nkonya chief was, so that they, the chiefs can discuss the issue and more so when there was an

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existing boundary. A misunderstanding ensued between them when the man took the Anya and hit and killed the chief's linguist.

One can state that the map has contributed to the protractedness of the conflict. The decision of the German colonial administration to map the place with boundaries that are being contested is a major problem in the attempts at finding lasting peace between the parties. The Alavanyo participants have discredited the authenticity of the map and the motive behind it and this map has been the major evidence used in the courts and which has resulted in several rulings and appeals, which still failed to transform the conflict. Historical rivalries from Azar's (1990) PSC analysis also feature in the condition above. The mistrust built over the years between the parties stemming from the map and the motive behind has also contributed to the lack of acceptance. From the issues in the FGD, Hans Gruner was in court on a similar issue between the Akpafu and Santrokofi (both neighbours of the Alavanyo and Nkonya) for which Gruner confirmed the map is a sketch and therefore could not be used. The Nkonya, however, disputed this claim. The Nkonya gladly made the map (Plate 1) available to the research team for verification.

Plate 1: Gruner Map (1913) of the Study Communities and Four Neighbouring States

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

The map was supported and held in confidence by the Nkonya while the Alavanyo by their responses also supported the traditional boundaries of the *Anya* or *Ntomeh* trees. The narrations, in sum, suggest that both groups hailed from different places and later converged at the same location centuries ago. They initially had a cordial and cooperative relationship but experienced an internecine conflict in 1923 caused by land boundary encroachment and decreases in land space to support the needs of both groups. Since then, the issues have changed and taken various dimensions over the course of the conflict. These issues suggest the need for a comprehensive transformation of

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issues, actors, rules and structures since these factors have continuously changed in the course of the conflict (Väyrynen, 1991). A deeper examination of these later in the report through the responses of the key informants. The next section looked at the developing issues in the conflict which happens to be the concern of the chapter.

Developing issues in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict

As the first objective of this research, this section sought to establish the current state of the Alavanyo-Nkonya land resource cum ethnic identity conflict especially after the government of Ghana deployed the state security apparatus such as the military and police contingents in the area to keep peace and serve as a buffer between the two groups and prevent people from either side from entering the disputed piece of land. Conflicts go through phases such as pre-escalation, escalation, and post-escalation phases (Zartman, 2001). The post-escalation phase is characterised by issues such as ripeness, avoidance, cooperation or dialogue and reconstruction through transformative activities (Coleman et al., 2008). The transformative activities can be initiated and enforced by the parties themselves or leaders of the society or the government.

According to Galtung (1969; 1996), when resolution attempts fail and result in a stalemate, the situation presents conditions for negative peace. The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict according to the key respondents is characterised by episodic attacks and counter-attacks, acts of discrimination and tensions, and negative peace instead of positive peace is the prevailing condition. The study asked key informants about the current state of the conflict and to further rank the level of the conflict on a scale between one and 10 with one being low and 10 being very high. This lends to Galtung's (1969) assertion that no society can

exist without some level of conflict and Marx and Engel's (1967) argument that all societies are in perpetual conflict. This implies that are pockets of conflict no matter how peaceful a society may seem, corroborating Galtung's negative peace. Some responses are the following:

> Yeah, I should say it's 5. It is there because a lot of visitations have been embarked on by stakeholders and a lot of dialogues and other forms of engagements have gone on between the two towns through the peace council (Interview with a REGSEC Member, Male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

Another key informant, an official of a CSO also narrated the following in the quotation below:

> The relationship between the Alavanyo and Nkonya, at the moment, can best be described as a cat-and-mouse relationship. They're living a life of suspicion and they all suspect each other of planning evil against them. There used to be roads and streets connecting the two communities but those cannot be used anymore… They used to be very cordial communities, they live together according to oral tradition… (Interview with a CSO official, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

Similarly, another key informant rated the conflict four on a 1-10 scale. He emphasised that:

> Currently, I will say four and describe it as less acrimonious because what we used to hear, read, or experience before I took over [office] in the year 2017, has declined, and we are no longer experiencing those breath-taking cases any longer. Let me put it at 4, maybe if I should explain, it is still in their mind that there is a conflict and there is the suspicion that there could be attacks generated by any of the factions at any time but in reality, is different. The situation of revenge is there and the fact that the sides are pushing for

compensation from the government (Interview with a REGSEC member, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

Another key informant, who is a resident of Nkonya also responded to the existence of the conflict and its level presently:

> Maybe three. Because there is still tension amongst us and since they are ready to kill our people. I don't think it can be rated five. There is no war but we are living in fear. That is the reason why I am rating it at 3 (Interview with a youth leader, male, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

Considering the responses, one can decipher that the conflict is not over since not much has been done or is being done to resolve the root causes of the conflict (i.e., the human needs concerns such as identity, livelihoods etc) which is characteristic of the liberal conflict resolution approach and mechanisms (Azar, 1987; Lederach, 2014). Mechanisms such as dialogue and other engagements have been deployed so far but these only dealt with the manifestations of the violence, leaving the underlying issues which are making the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict protracted (Agyei et al, 2023; Anumel et al., 2021; Asare, 2023; Beaudoin, 2013; Botes, 2003; Gariba, 2023; Lederach, 2003; Midodzi & Imoro, 2013). From the responses, the conflict has been viewed by the various key informants and the participants to be at different stages of intensity (scale 1-10) depending on their experiences but they all suggest that the conflict is still present but with a reduction in violent clashes since 2019.

The FGDs, however, gave indications of the conflict being high in intensity as compared to key informants. In the groups, discussants such as farmers, hunters and those who suffered livelihood losses gave higher indications of the presence of the violence. The narrations of the participants

during FGDs also support the existence of conflict in the area. Stemming from an FGD in Nkonya, the participants stated that they do not have conflict with the other ethnic groups or neighbouring communities except with a particular ethnic group, the Alavanyo. They are not in conflict with the other groups and so do not accept that they are violent. Interestingly, one thing that became clear is that key informants who lived in the area rated the conflict lower than the key informants who lived outside the two communities of the conflict in Alavanyo and Nkonya. The exception was the key informant below, who lives in the conflict area and believed the conflict was present in high intensity also mentioned some triggers and issues in the conflict. The informant said:

> The conflict is still there. Studies have revealed that conflict entrepreneurs are those fuelling the conflict. The disputed land is rich in wood. They go there to harvest the wood and, in the process, they fight and kill themselves there. Just a week ago, a wood operator was killed in the bush. So, the harvesting of wood triggers the conflict. Sometimes the Nkonya come and attack us and sometimes, our people die. An instance, five years ago, a woman was shot dead in her house, after cooking. So, the conflict is still there. For instance, if I go to Nkonya now and identify myself as an Alavanyo, I may not come back alive. But for about three years now, we haven't experienced violence (Interview with a Sub-Chief, male, 27th April 2022, Alavanyo).

From the quote, one can infer that the respondent stated that the conflict is still present although he stays in the area. This is contrary to the earlier responses by other key informants. As noted previously, the lack of resources has been noted to culminate in protracted conflicts (Azar 1990; Ahiave, 2013; Collier & Hoeffler, 2002; Duah, 2014; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). Further, there is a mention of a current driver in the conflict which is timber felling by the

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merchants who deal in the timber or wood products. They attack and kill each other in the forest on the blind side of the security personnel, local leaders and residents of both communities. Timber harvesting which is a lucrative source of livelihood for the merchants has contributed to the protractedness of the conflict. These timber merchants may be hidden faces or actors who are benefitting from the conflict and who may not want the conflict to end (Anumel et al, 2021; Agyei et al., 2023), while residents of both groups suffer deprivation as they are unable to go to the farm due to fear of being attacked, injured or killed.

The responses also suggest that the parties are at the avoidance stage where they do not cooperate on any level (Coleman et al., 2008). The presence of the conflict agrees with Galtung's (1969) negative peace where segments of the society face deprivation, discrimination, continued direct violence posed by the presence of structural and cultural issues that impede the attainment of justice and equal access to resources. Galtung held that, without restructuring violent perpetuating structures, there cannot be an end to conflicts. Galtung adds that conflicts stem from contradictions in the structure of the global societal structure which confirms Azar's (1990) international linkages as a contributor to the intractability of violent, local, communal conflicts.

Considering responses from the FGD participants and the quotes from key informants regarding the state of the conflict, the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict still exists due to the parties mistrusting and being overly suspicious of each other and those who are working for peace between them. At present, there is a stalemate between the Nkonya and Alavanyo, the primary parties to the conflict. The parties continue to blame the other for the conflict and therefore avoid each

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other. The government moved in to take over the 6,300-acre piece of disputed land, and the study aimed to know if the takeover ended the conflict. They only see the conflict as the fault of the others confirming the "We" against "Them" claims of ethnic divide and identity (see Aikins & Ametefe, 2017; Ametefe et al., 2021; Connor, 1994; Cunningham, 1998; 2001) where they see only good to be associated with themselves and the bad with the others.

From the foregone discussions, one can say that the relationship between ethnic groups is anything but cordial due to the protracted contestation resulting from their different backgrounds and identities. Conflicts generally result in the estranged relationship between the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups involved in the violent contestation. Dialogue between the parties is non-existent and communication channels are blocked (Asamoah, 2014; Lederach, 2003; Miall, 2004). The researcher, therefore, sought to know if the groups interacted with each other on the individual and group levels as this increases the chance for cooperation between the groups towards a successful transformation.

The relationship between both parties was described by the key informants and participants in the FGDs using metaphors. The use of metaphors signifies a deep description of the conflict between the parties. A careful examination by a key informant regarding the relationship between the two parties is also a "cat and mouse relationship". Another metaphor that was used by another respondent to describe the relationship between the Nkonya and the Alavanyo groups is like that of the "Tongue and Teeth". With this respondent described the relationship as a close one in which there can be unintentional of

one party by the other but due to the closeness that exists between the groups, the parties must learn to forgive the mishaps and continue to live in peace.

"You do me, I do you" is the third metaphor that was used by a respondent to describe the relationship between the Nkonya and Alavanyo and also the current state of the conflict. This describes a situation where one group attacks the other and they also counter-attack. This description also suggests a stalemate that has left the parties in constant suspicion and waiting for revenge for past atrocities meted out to them (Connor, 1994). This situation is normally in the case where the parties have experienced losses of livelihoods. Revenge becomes the way of life of the groups, as they retaliate past attacks and losses suffered in battle. This leads to breakdown in interactions and the peace process relapses into conflict at the least provocation.

Azar (1978; 1990) noted that the threat to livelihoods is considered a frustration of the means to achieving their goals and this also ends in conflicts becoming protracted. There is, therefore, the need to address the basic needs issues of both parties in the conflict since the parties depend on this land for their survival and consider the need to compensate the parties who lost in the course of the conflict to restore peace. The issue of compensation is featured in the responses of the key informants and participants. A key informant states that the conflict is at the stage where there was the need to consider the compensation of the parties as a step towards peace. He narrated that:

> When we took over, we realised that what was causing the whole
> thing was that the victims of the conflict had not been contacted and
> there have not been any interactions with them. So, when we realised
> that it is a retaliatory issue, the first thing we did was to identify the
> victims of the war. Also, the dialogue has always been between the
> elders of the two towns, but we decided to dialogues between the

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victims. That is, those who lost loved ones, relatives and those whom the conflict has affected in one way or the other. So, we identified them from both sides. Another thing we did was, we had a clinical psychologist meet with both sides. Even though we started and had the good will, our challenge was money. So, we did that only once, though it calmed down the situation but it was not enough to provide the needed support (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

From the quotation, the key informant interview emphasises the need to consider engaging members of both communities who may have lost family members or property due to the violence. The continuous dialogue and interactions coupled with psychological treatments for the traumas suffered as a result of the conflict will set the tone for the peaceful transformation of the conflict. Thus, the parties will stop the retaliatory attacks and counter-attacks for the past losses they experienced. They managed to locate some of the members who had suffered losses and engaged them on various levels to ensure their pain and trauma were alleviated.

This confirms the findings made by Volkan (1990, cited in Connor, 1994), that in conflict situations, the parties who are unable to mourn have the highest propensity to retaliate and thereby prolong the conflict beyond the normal conflict cycle. The enemy system theory considers negative identity (those seeking revenge to settle past humiliations and scores) and the inability to mourn as big threats to peace after escalation. This confirms the assertions made by Beaudoin (2013) that protracted conflicts revolve around past traumas.

Also, the key informants and participants were asked if the government takeover of the disputed piece of land had contributed to a successful end of the conflict. The government indicated that the piece of land would be used for the

establishment of a military training school for officers of the Ghana Armed Forces. The responses of the key informants during the interviews and participants in the FGDs pointed to the fact that the takeover could not contribute to ending the conflict as the government expected. This rather derailed and ended up complicating the efforts that have been invested by stakeholders and what has been achieved so far in the attempts to find durable peace in the area. It has added to the stalemate of the conflict although, it has introduced some amount of transformation of the violence into constructive ends. The key informant, a CSO representative, stated:

> The government taking over the contested land will not solve the problem, in the sense that, there is a relational issue or relationship issue. If we have not solved that, whether the government takes over or not, they can still continue killing each other (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

Considering the quotation above, it is evident that the government takeover of the piece of land did not end the conflict although the parties have reduced the violence that was perpetuated. The role of the state as enumerated in the PSC theory comes up here (Azar, 1990; Beaudoin, 2013). The state takes up the role to ensure peace by deploying security agencies on the ground to enforce peace and prevent further escalation. But the parties suspect the government to be in support of the opposing side. As a result, both parties, though they complied with the terms on the whole, some members of the communities, especially those engaged in activities such as hunting and lumbering continue to defy the demands. The FGD conducted in both communities also noted that the government takeover in the past was meant to create a forest reserve. The recent 2019 takeover was initially for a development

project but later changed to the construction of a military training school which has not materialised at the time of this publication. The government's level of commitment to see to the end of the conflict as stated by the residents and some of the key informants is low.

Another development in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict is the use of the land by spoilers or conflict entrepreneurs for various benefits. These individuals will do anything to make sure that the conflict drags on in the area for them to carry out their unlawful activities for their financial and economic benefit. A key informant narrated:

> And most of the time…when we hear about these violent clashes happening, people hide behind it and do their economic activities. And also, that place has become a "wee" production area. That is "Indian hemp" and this is the secret (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

Another key informant also narrated the following in an interview:

> Because last two years there was an issue where policemen were involved among other things. The underlying issue is "weed production" which is causing the problem. The police even shot one person from Alavanyo. The issue was about Indian hemp cultivation, which some people are making money from (Interview with a REGSEC member, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

The quotation suggests the piece of land being used by spoilers or hidden conflict entrepreneurs for their nefarious activities. This is new dynamic which has been introduced into the conflict and which is contributing to the protractedness of the conflict since these people have some people in the communities as partners and since they want their business to continue, they

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continue to engage in shootouts and since the identities of the victims are not disclosed, residents from both sides tend to believe are their people.

The interviews interestingly revealed that the land was being used by hidden individuals for the cultivation of marijuana or cannabis for commercial purposes and their private gains. While affirming the cannabis cultivation on the piece of land, the second informant's narration goes further by mentioning the police service as a likely party that could be involved. The conflict has given way for them to use the lapses in security to circumvent the laws to their advantage. This also confirms the views of Collier and Hoefler (2002; 2004) regarding the causes of the protractedness of various conflicts.

The key informants revealed that the land, although under the seizure of the government to be used for the construction of a military training school for training officers and men of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF), Ghana Police Service (GPS), Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) and the other security services, other people still manage to access the piece of land and use it for other economic ventures at the blindside of all stakeholders. Instead of the land being used for activities that benefit the citizens of both Alavanyo and Nkonya and Ghana as a whole, it is being used for the production of cannabis which is harvested and shipped out for various sums that benefit a few. Gariba (2023) established in a study of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict that the youth of Alavanyo-Nkonya engage in marijuana or cannabis cultivation as an alternative livelihood due to the years of the devastation caused to the area and where the legitimate ways of engaging in viable economic ventures are non-existent. These people could be citizens or non-citizens of the area.

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This confirms Collier and Hoefler's (2002) assertion regarding spoilers or entrepreneurs who may not be directly involved in the conflict but take advantage of the resources being contested over and benefit from a chunk of it. These are people who will stop at nothing to make sure they create or foment the chaos that prolongs the conflict (Lebaron & Lederach, 2003; Lederach, 1995; Miall, 2004).

The commitment of government to establishing peace in the area has been questioned by many as they are convinced that the government is unwilling to do that. Others also think that some government officials, institutions and agencies are complicit in the activities that are benefitting from the conflict. A key informant said the following:

> Also, ineffectiveness on the side of state agencies and here, I am talking about security officers because these exploited products are transported in their raw form along the road to business operating centres at Hohoe, Kpando and Dambai. So, assuming there was effective monitoring on the road, I think seizures could have been done and arrests effected for these are stakeholders whose activities are obstructing the peace process (Interview with a REGSEC member, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

This quotation questions how the individual or groups involved in the maintenance of peace and also implementing the agreements and peace pacts are doing their work. The key informant questions how marijuana manages to leave the communities and get onto the various distribution channels and markets, even outside the country for sale. The informant blames the security services such as the police and customs who are on the roads and who must detect and confiscate the marijuana when it is being transported. Here, as noted by Azar (1978; 1990) and Beaudoin (2013), the role of the state or government

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and agencies or institutions in the peace efforts have not been good. The spoilers are therefore benefitting from the conflict and these institutions may be accessories to the illegal activities of the cultivators and the marketers. The proceeds from these activities can also be used as sources of funding for the conflict by these same unknown faces which may include the state or agencies of state. It also brings to the issues of the need for structural changes which is a concern of the conflict transformation theory. The institutions and security structures are not potent in dealing with the menace.

Emerging Issues in the Alavanyo-Nkonya Conflict

In the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict, it is apparent that the conflict boiled down to limited space for the two groups to live side by side and manage the limited resources within their societies, of which the disputed piece of land happens to be at the centre. This piece of land has been said to be fertile and can support the growth of crops in any season of the year. The land provided both groups with rich economic value due to the timber for lumbering among other resources (Duah, 2014; Kendie et al, 2014; Mensah et al., 2016). These resources, according to the data are water, the land such as tree species, cocoa, coffee, cola, and minerals yet to be determined among others.

Though this has been supported by earlier studies (Ahiave, 2013; Gariba, 2017; Midodzi & Imoro, 2011; GIZ, 2019), it came out in this study that the issues have moved beyond land to other issues such as identity and issues of survival and sustenance (Tsikata & Seini, 2004) which is considered by Azar (1990) as drivers of PSCs especially when one party feels they are being deprived of equal access. This confirms the views held by Tonah and Anamzoya (2016) that it is typical of conflicts in Ghana and most of Africa do not emerge

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from one source but instead from a plethora of issues. The issues presented at the onset and escalation of the conflict continued to change as the conflict progressed. A key informant, an official of a CSO, said the following in an interview:

> A violent clash happened when people went to fetch water from some creek in the area and there was a misunderstanding as to who fetches first and who does next and this resulted in a violent confrontation, leading to the death of somebody. The issue then shifted to the ownership of the land and 'so you would need to either pay homage to us' or 'don't even come to our land' or 'get off from our land!' Of course, the Alavanyo would also not agree. That also shifted to things on and in the land including timber, minerals, iron or other things in the earth's crust which both groups say belong to them. So, there was an open conflict leading to deaths on both sides (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

From the response by this key informant, it is apparent that the resources also feature in the conflict. The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict is over land, water and other resources in the land. The conflict has human needs issues which need to be addressed to make the conflict transformation possible. The groups having equal access and being treated as equal partners in development is key to finding lasting solutions to protracted conflicts (Rothman & Olson, 2001). Though, Azar (1978; 1990) states that human needs are a central feature in protracted conflicts. Azar added that identity and other related needs such as recognition of ethnic identity. However, Collier and Hoeffler (2002; 2004) also establish that it is man's greed to benefit more from a bigger share of the limited resources in a society which is protracted conflicts. This finding was made while they studied some resource-rich nations such as Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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Regarding the current state of the conflict between Alavanyo and Nkonya, it can be said that there is no clear winner presently as the conflict is in a stalemate and the parties (Ahiave, 2013; Anumel, 2021). As a result of that, the groups are living in a continuous state of suspicion of the other wanting to hurt or annihilate each other. The conflict area has been demarcated as of now making the Nkonya group are currently located in the Oti region while the Alavanyo remains part of the then Volta region. The key informant narrated:

> If you look at the area very well, it borders the Ewe-speaking (Volta Region now) and the Guans in the Oti area. So, it shows that the Nkonya people no longer belong to the Volta Region due to the re-demarcation of the regions in 2019 which they were very much happy about. When the place was re-demarcated and Nkonya became part of the Oti region while the Alavanyo remained in the Volta Region. Thus, the Nkonya no longer part of the Ewe speaking groups but rather now part of the…Guan/Akan-speaking communities such as Jasikan and Kajebi and so on. That also plays a huge factor in the transformation or not of the conflict (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

As stated in the quote by a key informant, both the Nkonya and Alavanyo communities serve as the boundary towns between the Oti and Volta regions or Biakoye District and Hohoe Municipal Assemblies respectively. There was the belief that the regional re-demarcation by the current government in 2018 which removed the Nkonya from the Volta region and placed it in the Oti region will contribute to solving the age-old conflict. But as it was seen in early 2019, the groups clashed again leading to the death of two people.

This was also noted and mentioned by the key informants and in the FGDs. The re-demarcation has, rather, worsened the plight of those in charge of the resolution or transformation of the conflict as the groups now live in two

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different regions, under different local government units and this can make it difficult to call them to a meeting at short notices especially in emergencies. The Nkonya now insist on the Alavanyo moving to the Oti regional capital, Dambai, to engage them in peace talks even though the Oti regional capital is far from both communities or ethnicities. This may further have dire effects on peace attempts. Having dealt with the developing issues in the conflict, attention will be shifted to issues of legitimacy and who has the right to decide what goes on in the area.

Legitimacy and authority issues in the conflict

Considering the history of the two ethnic groups, there are issues of power and contestations regarding who has the authority to control and decide who can or cannot access resources within the area where these two ethnic groups are located. The legitimacy bit is connected to who has the right to decide who stays in the area came up severally in the responses of the key informants such as chiefs and residents during the KII and also by the participants in the FGDs conducted in both communities. These issues are the initial triggers and remains one of the topmost triggers in the recent clashes witnessed between the Alavanyo and Nkonya. Another key informant said the following during a KII:

> Yeah, when they analyse the conflict, it is not just the land or water or anything but also become an identity and who is the boss. So, who should respect whom? Who owns the area? Who is the "stranger", as the Nkonya people like to call the Alavanyo? (Interview with an official of a CSO, 16th April 2022 Accra).

Considering the narrative by the official of the CSO above, the power balance is a key issue in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict and should be a major concern to the peace practitioners who are selected to facilitate the process. The

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groups are contesting for who is to be considered the dominant group and who is the subordinate. The dominant is the majority and is responsible for directing the affairs of the area and also further determining who can access what and when. With this control comes wealth and power. Due to the result of rational processes which assure some gains to the rational beings regarding the mineral resources yet to be discovered in the land, none of the groups is ready to back off and watch all the benefits that will accrue from the exploitation of the said minerals go the other group (Bates, 1980). The control of the area during the exploitation of the minerals is a major source of power to the group that will be in charge (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002). This shift from interest in land to identities is also noted by Rothman and Olson (2001).

As noted by Dudouet (2007), power asymmetries or imbalances also contribute to protracted conflicts. Dudouet asserts that for effective transformation of conflicts, there is the need for the leadership of the practitioners to consider balancing the power and improve the relationship between the parties. There is, therefore, the need to consider the differences and work towards balancing the power of both sides to improve equity among the parties to enhance the achievement of a successful transformation (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). This can be achieved through the cultures of the parties that do not tilt the balance of power and the use of culturally-informed conflict transformation mechanisms.

Power can be conceptualised in terms of identity, especially where individual and collective identities are understood as being always created under social pressures (Du Gay & Hall, 1996). Dudouet and Dressler (2016) added that power is at the base of identity formation and these are rooted in culture. In

the context of Alavanyo and Nkonya, the issue of identity has become the focus in the conflict. This has culminated in situations where members of the opposing side are considered threats and could be attacked when seen among members of the other group. Identity is crucial as it is reproduced based on power and is important to the analysis of the conflict between the two ethnic groups.

With the current state of the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict established in this chapter, the next chapter examined the mechanisms that were used to restore peace between the Alavanyo and Nkonya in past conflict situations and why they may have failed to maintain peace between the parties.

Chapter Summary

This chapter addressed the current state of the conflict between the Alavanyo and the Nkonya. It first addressed the history of the two groups and how they acquired their different identities and the majority and minority relationship that exists between them. The history positions them travelling to the area at different points in time, with the Nkonya coming first and the Alavanyo, later. This weaves into their majority and minority or indigene and settler relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE

MECHANISMS USED TO RESOLVE THE ALAVANYO-NKONYA

CONFLICT

Introduction

This chapter deals with the second objective of the study which is to examine the various mechanisms that have been used in the past to find a durable and sustainable peace between the Alavanyo and Nkonya and to restore the cordial relationship that existed between the ethnic groups before the first violent escalation. The chapter is divided into two sections; the first section addresses the mechanisms that have been used in the past which were indigenous or traditional, Western or Eurocentric and hybrid (mix of indigenous and Western) mechanisms are discussed. The second section examines challenges to the mechanisms that were used in the past.

Mechanisms Used in the Past

Conflicts, due to the havoc they wreck on people and societies require interventions to be put in place to restore peace between the parties involved in the conflict and to the entire area and reinstate human dignity. Many mechanisms have been deployed during times of escalations (Agyei, 2023; Anumel et al., 2021; Duah, 2014; Mensah et al., 2016; Midodzi & Imoro, 2011; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). The study sought to establish which mechanisms have been used in past conflict situations. According to Ibrahim (2018), mechanisms that are applied in such conflict situations are Western, traditional or hybrid (mix of the traditional and Western). This study also found that the same three types of mechanisms were deployed in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict during and after escalations.

As espoused in the previous chapter, some of the mechanisms that were used in the past to restore durable peace between Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups are litigation, individual- or group-led mediation, CSO/NGO-led mediation (WANEP, or NPC/RPC) or state institutions such as Regional House of Chiefs (RHC), negotiations which considered such as development projects, cultural strategies such as shooting into the sunset, traditional modes of road construction, sports and games such as football/soccer, board games such as *ludo* and *oware*, card games, and mediation by the parties, led by chiefs. These mechanisms can be classified into traditional or indigenous, Western or liberal or a hybrid of both Western and indigenous mechanisms, the involvement of the primary actors who are mostly residents of the two ethnicities and how these played out in the study communities are also discussed.

Indigenous mechanisms

Indigenous or traditional mechanisms according to Ibrahim (2018) are those processes or mechanisms that are embedded in the traditions of the people. These mechanisms are indigenous and are better attuned to the needs and the ways of the people and the communities (Absolon, 2010; Ateng et al., 2018; Ibrahim, 2018; Tsega, 2004). This is due to the restorative approaches to ending conflicts that are adopted and used. The study sought from the key informants and participants which traditional mechanisms were used in the past in dealing with the conflict and the actors who were involved in the process.

The first mechanism used at the indigenous level is mediation. A key informant narrated:

> What we witnessed from 1983 to 2003 involved bishops and moderators, and all the citizens of the towns including their chiefs.

In the process, they made both towns shoot guns into the sunset as a sign of peace. This was done amidst the incantations and invocation of the ancestors and gods of their forebears and a law was passed that none of the parties should take a gun or other weapons to kill the other. Anyone who does that would incur the wrath of God and the gods and whatever happens to the person involved wouldn't concern anyone. (Interview with a linguist, male, 27th April 2022, Alavanyo).

In the narration of this key informant, they used traditional mediation led by eminent people such as the clergy. Religion embodies spirituality and it plays an important role in establishing durable peace in communities after conflict de-escalation (Ramsbotham et al, 2017). Due to that, these religious leaders are revered and they command a lot of respect during these times and thus their involvement in peace attempts is welcomed. In Alavanyo-Nkonya, Christianity and African Traditional Religion which includes ancestral worship and belief in the gods exist side by side. However, most are Christians and so accept the leadership of these clergymen. This made them suitable and accepted by the parties in both communities.

These clergymen were reverends, bishops and moderators who were leaders at the helm of affairs regarding their congregations or denominations. They led the processes to restore peace and agreements were reached. These were accompanied by the invocation of the gods and ancestors to punish those that take up arms against the other party or their members. They later performed some customary rites after which they fired gunshots into the sunset to signify an end to the conflict. But after some years, the conflict relapsed and this was blamed on the non-continuous nature of the customs. Others indicated that the customs had to be repeated frequently and not left as a one-time event. Absolon (2010) in the Western doorway of the medicinal wheel which was used as an

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illustration for the indigenous wholistic theory indicated the spiritual value of the people which had to be renewed and revitalised intermittently.

These indigenous mechanisms aim to restore the relationships between the parties instead of the win-lose adversarial approach of litigation or arbitration which are based on Western competitive ideals (Adjei & Adebayo, 2014; Kwesi, 2013). These mechanisms leave all the parties to the conflict happy as they are based on indigenous win-win approaches of transformation or management as noted by Richmond (2010) in the fourth-generation theories and approaches.

Second, payment of homage was one method or strategy that featured in the establishment of peace. The Nkonya ethnic group made the importance of the homage to be paid by the Alavanyo and conduit to finding peace.

> For instance, if they were to be paying homage to our paramount chief, we will not have any issues, including this conflict. If you celebrate my festival with me and I also do the same with you, why should we fight? We won't. If we pay homage to them, then it means we are selling off our rights. They are supposed to pay homage to our chief and when they do so, there will be peace because we are the indigenes of the land. (Interview with an Assemblyperson, male, 30th April 2022, Nkonya).

The quotation by this key informant suggests the importance of the Alavanyo paying homage to the Nkonya and how this holds the key to peace in the area. Festival celebrations are also mentioned by the informant as a uniting force that can bring the parties together, In the interviews and FGDs, this concern was made clear in the responses. The Nkonya posit that if the homage is paid, this will impact their relationship and lead to peace. They consider the non-payment of the homage as a defiance of their authority which see as

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questioning their legitimacy and control over the resources of the area, including land.

Also, artistic performances were held to make the peace mechanisms work. In an FGD, it came out that a musical orchestra was formed with a membership of both groups who engaged in traditional musical and dance performances. Sporting events such as *oware*, draft, ludo, and *ampe* were organised between the parties and at other times, with their neighbours to bolster good relationships. It was done on occasions such as festivals, Easter and Christmas celebrations. A key informant is quoted below:

> Yes, we used to play all sorts of games including oware and ampe, and even four-pole football, together until some years and the conflicts started again. They organise this for both communities during the peace process to bring us together and to talk to each other and sometimes, after the conflict has been resolved to mark the end of the violence (Interview with a resident, female, 11th May 2022, Nkonya).

Oware, *ampe* and other games were organised for us to help us mingle and interact with each other. Football matches, such as, four posts were organised between two groups and also a football team was formed and named after the two groups. In the FGDs, it emerged that at a point a football team was formed *ALANKO United*. It was an acronym of the first three letters of the names of the two groups, Alavanyo and Nkonya. As can be seen, many mechanisms have been used but they these could not keep the peace between the parties permanently.

A good part of the deployment of indigenous strategies or mechanisms is the use of local or indigenous languages or dialects that are understood and spoken by all the stakeholders including the conflicting parties. In this case,

there will be no need to translate the foreign language being used into local languages and which can result in changing meanings of the issues being discussed being lost during translation (Adjei & Adebayo, 2014). According to a key informant, the reason why the Alavanyo can speak Nkonya and the Nkonya speak Ewe was:

> Yes, because we intermarried. We have lived together for years and have interacted over centuries. They marry our women and take them to Nkonya and their women also marry our men and are brought here to live with us. This has resulted in us learning each other's language and we can speak well (Interview with an Assemblyperson, male, 12th May 2022, Alavanyo)

A resident of Nkonya also narrated the following in an interview:

> So traditionally we are also doing our part to resolve this issue. Recently, they sent the issue to Kpando, that is, to the Kpando paramount chief, Torgbi Dagadu, and the chief said he has to call the Police Commander and the two ethnic groups to come and meet to discuss the conflict so that they know how to solve it. However, we did not hear from them again. So, we don't know what is happening at the moment (Interview with a resident, male, 30th April 2022, Nkonya).

The quotation suggests the use of traditional authorities, such as chiefs to establish peace between the parties while the parties themselves also seek the assistance of other traditional heads and their councils to find the needed transformation of the violent characterisation of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. Also, in a FGD conducted in Alavanyo, it was registered that the indigenous or traditional methods were able to help maintain some peace which lasted compared to the Western or Eurocentric zero-sum ideals.

The above quotes suggest the use of the Ewe language at the local courts and the local mediation committees did this very well. According to the key informants and participants, though the Nkonya spoke Nkonya, a sub-Guan dialect, most of them spoke Ewe fluently and more than half of the Alavanyo also spoke Nkonya. This made the medium of exchange and engagement smooth as there was no need for translation which may result in the loss of meaning to any of the parties. A closer examination points to the fact that the use of a common language in the earlier years was helpful. Language is a resource used for dialogue and is a good hallmark for conflict transformation (Kenaw, n. d.; Lederach, 2014). This was so until years later when the Nkonya refused to use the Ewe language and demanded to use Nkonya or Akan or English Language and demanded it is interpreted.

Intermarriage is also one of the indigenous mechanisms that the groups used in the past to bind their ethnic groups together as a unit. This was encouraged for many years creating a situation where almost every family on one side has a family member on the other side of the divide.

> Our men used to go there and sleep over there and come and their men also used to do the same. For some reason, our women also like their men. To some extent, we encourage intermarriage. But now, if you try going there you might not come back alive. So, culture can work if they wish (Interview with an Assemblyperson, male, 12th May 2022, Alavanyo).

Another key informant also narrated the following during an interview:

> Some of us have relatives who are Ewe-speaking people and that is why we also speak Ewe as we have lived together for several years. The marriage relationship between us has been a major reason for the language exchange. People from Alavanyo also speak our

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language (Interview with a resident, female, 30th April 2022, Nkonya).

Considering the quotations above, intermarriages provided a good tool or mechanism that facilitated the amelioration of the violence that characterised the conflict. These may have happened and may be happening during the peace process. Kenaw (n. d.) and Asmamaw (2014) have attributed the restoration of peace between the settler and indigenous groups that are experiencing violent clashes due to cattle rustling and boundary contestations in *Woreda* and other regions in Ethiopia to intermarriages between parties involved in the conflict. After years, differences between the parties are blurred out and the parties begin to see each other as one. This finding fits into earlier findings by Francis (1969 cited in Giddens, 1989) and van den Berghe (1975) in communities in South Africa and the US.

Another mechanism is indigenous or local mediation. This is where a local leader, normally a chief or a local leader who does not hail from both disputing groups, is selected to help conflicting parties decide an amicable end to a misunderstanding. Here, the mediation is not facilitated by NGOs or CSOs or state officials and they do not use formal means as is done using Western means. This one welcomes the use of traditions and practices, tangible or intangible, for the process of transformation. Before the local mediation processes led by the chiefs and people, the libation was poured to invoke the presence and participation their ancestors and the gods in the process. This is believed to submit the process to the sprit realm for consideration and approval. This act satisfies the traditional African values and the belief in life after death and the special role and contribution that the spirit world plays in the lives of the living.

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Their acceptance is crucial to the decision of the living. The interviews suggested that libation was a major feature of Reverend Tawiah's mediation as well and it made the parties develop a sense of belongingness and recognition (Azar, 1985). The groups were also involved in most of the process and they participated.

The PSC theory presents four components of protracted conflicts and that dealing with these components contributes to the effective transformation of the conflict and thereby promotes peace. These are effective participation, security, distinctive identity, and social recognition of identity (Azar 1985). The study sought to also establish the level of involvement of the parties in the process. It was apparent that when the rights were performed in the communities or nearby, the residents partake in the processes. A key informant narrated the following in a KII:

> Yes. I remember Rev. Father Tawiah. He asked us to come together to settle the issue between the Nkonya and Alavanyo. So, a cow was even slaughtered to perform the traditional rights. So, the Nkonya and the Alavanyo were all present. It took place at the border and we all came together. Everything was okay until the conflict started again (Interview with a youth resident, male, 11th May 2022, Nkonya).

The quotation emphasises the use of customs and traditions of the people of both groups to cement their beliefs. The process also involved all the primary stakeholders especially the residents of Alavanyo-Nkonya. The people feel recognised and accepted through their invitation and participation.

Regarding the use of indigenous mechanisms, another informant from Nkonya mentioned the formation of local committees. He said the following:

Taking our initiatives for example, on both sides, we formed committees, we had one from there led by Mr. Afeti and the other headed by Hon. Solomon Donkor, so we started meeting at Kpando to resolve our own problem. We were even able to meet in Alavanyo to meet the king of Nkonya. We met the group from both sides, we met traditional leaders from both Alavanyo and Nkonya and we were about to meet the individuals, youth, women and we men and others from both sides. We wrote to the regional minister to help for our work to continue but we had no response from the regional minister. That was where the work ended but we are hopeful we will be given the chance to work (Interview with a resident, male, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

The quotation suggests the resourcefulness of both sides in their attempts to find peace between their people. They formed committees led by some known members of stakeholders in the communities or ethnic groups to meet and find solutions to the impasse. This, however, did not receive the backing of the political elites and so ended after a few meetings by the members. In the Alavanyo-Nkonya peace process under both Reverends Tawiah and Boamah, there was effective participation by all parties, made use of local strategies or mechanisms and this produced some level of peace between the disputing parties. This confirms the view by Tsega (2004) corroborated by Adebayo (2014) that when the people trust the process and the person leading the process the parties cooperate and work towards the achievement of peace. The people of Alavanyo-Nkonya were also assured of their security in the process and so partook in the process. Their identities were recognised and their peculiar needs were considered in the process. These processes led to peace.

Western mechanisms

Western mechanisms take root in the realist and international relations ideologies of Western Europe and America, mostly based on management and resolution of conflicts (Ibrahim, 2018). Western mechanisms are rooted in Western liberal and republican ideals that are mostly zero-sum where some parties win and this implies a loss for others. The resolution and management mechanisms are normally skewed towards notions such as winner takes all, management mechanisms that step in and deal with the crisis and evacuate (Richmond, 2010). These mechanisms benefit one of the parties to the conflict and leave the other party disgruntled and searching for ways to vent their embarrassment. This situation leads to periods of stalemate in the transformation process and keeps conflict still moving in cycles (MacGinty & Richmond, 2013; Richmond 2005).

The first or the major mechanism in the Western-style approach is litigation or adjudication. This mechanism saw both sides win or lose at different points in time and this led to the protractedness as there were appeals against the ruling of the courts throughout the conflict. A key informant narrated as follows:

> As a peace builder, I will not make that statement as to whether somebody has won or someone has lost. But, at least, there are legal arguments and decisions relating to the matter. So, in terms of legalities or litigation, there is a winner and there is a loser. But looking at the conflict as it stands today, I don't think there is any winner, and I don't think there is any loser (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

Interestingly, as can be inferred from the quotation, litigation is premised on one party winning and the other losing. However, it did not produce a lasting

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solution as the losing party appealed against the ruling and the ruling is set aside until a new determination is made again of the substantive issues and the facts. To the key informant, the legalities produced a winner and a loser but to him, there is no winner or loser as a practitioner who is versed in third-party interventions which are mostly alternative dispute resolution. From the narration, the conflict persists as there is no winner as it continues to leave periods of stalemate. This confirms the assertion made by the Nkonya that this has occurred eight different times where a court determination is made but the ruling was rejected by the losing side outrightly. This left a vacuum that further strained the relationship between the parties and left them in flux and the relations strained and then there is another escalation.

In an FGD conducted in Nkonya, the various court proceedings were enumerated by the participants. In 1953 the Nkonya sued the Alavanyo in the circuit court. A new land court was established, in Accra, and the case was transferred to Accra in 1957 and the Nkonya won their first case by Justice Van-Laire based on the Gruner map. The Alavanyo filed an appeal in 1959 but the suit was thrown out by Gavins Halt who stated that the map still held the boundary between Alavanyo and Nkonya. In 1961 the Nkonya went back to court. In 1966, the court asked a surveyor, Henry Hagan to re-demarcate the boundary between Nkonya and Alavanyo based on the Gruner map but due to the transfers of judges, there was a long delay of the case until 1970 under Justice Francois, who made a judgment in favour of the Nkonya. The Alavanyo still rejected the outcome for the third time.

In 1971, the Alavanyo filed a case in court that the Nkonya had flouted the injunction order but the Nkonya were declared victors and that they are the

owners of the land. They can go back for their property. In 1975, the Alavanyo were in court again under Justice Francois Yaw Amissah. The Nkonya were declared winners for the fifth time. In 1980, Alavanyo won the case. However, in the Stool Lands Boundaries Court under Justice Amowin Akuffo Addo (Senior), but the judgment went in favour of Nkonya but the ruling added there should be re-demarcation of the land. The Nkonya were unhappy, they went to court under Justice Cecelia Koranteng Addo, who quashed the ruling of the inferior court.

The paragraph above gives a chronology of the court cases, the rulings from the court and the counter-appeals that were filed and the outcome of the processes. It is evident that the court cases could not solve the case and helped with the resolution, management or transformation of the conflict but instead, prolonged it as the parties took turns to file suits, countersuits and appeals. The decisions were made based on the Gruner map of 1913 and at other times, recommendations of re-demarcation were also made by the court which left the parties unsatisfied. In 1970, according to the Nkonya, some of the Alavanyo came to atone for tenancy. That led to their lands being divided into three. One part was meant for Nkonya and two for those who crossed to farm.

This confirms the views of the indigenous wholistic theory that when the parties are left dissatisfied, they tend to refuse the outcome and this affects the recovery and healing process. The healing process should not leave any of the parties dissatisfied. The people must identify with the method and also fully participate in the process. The feeling of not being treated well leads to mistrust and the failure of the method (Absolon, 2019; Ateng et al., 2018; Poonwassie & Charter, 2005; Tsega, 2004). Also, when a neutral third party who is chosen to

mediate and broker peace between the conflicting parties comes from a different cultural background, the tendency to adopt and use the cultural practices and traditions of the parties suffers. The backgrounds of the mediators also matter in the process.

The second mechanism that was used was Western-styled negotiation and was formal and followed laid down procedures. The chiefs and their traditional councils led their people to negotiate and find the middle ground in their use of the limited resources including the land. The groups appreciate the need for land, and water among other needs and so co-operated in using these. A key informant, a youth leader who is a resident of Nkonya narrated the following in an interview:

> We share a boundary with the Alavanyo, I think that is the Deme area. So, when this thing was happening, they decided to call the elders from both sides to a meeting on the farm. Their elders met our elders, held their meetings and agreed that they were not going to fight again and that the conflict must end. They did stop for some time. We don't know what happened. One day and they went to the farm, and their yams had been uprooted and cut into pieces and everything was destroyed. Their food crops and farms on that land were burnt (Interview with a Youth resident, male, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

The response by the resident confirms the negotiations being used along the way to solve the impasse between the groups. It was the leadership (elders) of both groups meeting to find durable peace between them. They had some understanding, managed their differences and ended the violent conflict based on the decisions that were arrived at by the elders. These negotiations were based on gerontocracy where elders are allowed to lead and negotiate for peace

on behalf of their people. The negotiation worked for some time and the conflict erupted again as the respondent indicated. The study found that this was later substituted by Western mediation led by experts and well-meaning individuals.

In FGDs conducted in both communities, it came out that in 2015, the then Vice President, Kwesi Amissah Arthur invited both parties but the meeting could not come off due to certain setbacks on the part of all the parties. The vice president had wanted to use the eminent person mechanism to approach a settlement between the parties. This buttresses the views held by Absolon (2019) in the indigenous wholistic theory that Western or European mechanisms were appreciated and used more than local mechanisms.

The third Western mechanism that was used in the past is arbitration which was used under the German colonial government from 1913 to 1918 and the British from 1918 to 1923. This was used after the initial encroachment over land and when Gruner was tasked to map out the area which covered the six nations including Alavanyo and Nkonya (see Plate 1). A key informant narrated the following when asked about the mechanisms that have been used in the past to resolve the conflict between the parties:

> They used commissions and some clergy. The Boamah Commission, some clergy also came and dug into that but they did not accept. The commissions were introduced by the government (Interview with a resident, male, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

The narration by the key informant also points to the fact that in recent times it has taken the form of the government appointing a group under terms of reference a set of deliverables that conduct sittings aimed at investigating the concerns of the parties and make recommend solutions to the government regarding what to do to end the conflict. Some of these Commissions of Enquiry

such as the Boamah and Bombarde Committees directed the government to demarcate the piece of land between the ethnic groups but this has not been effectively implemented. The Bombarde Commission could not sustain the trust that the parties had for the team as they suspected of foul play.

The fourth mechanism is the government deploying peacekeepers, imposing curfews on the parties and the conflict area barring movements of people at certain times of the day and in some cases, taking over the piece of disputed land. In the case where the government took over the piece of land, it meant to use it for various developmental projects that were to benefit both sides but none of the projects was executed. Finally, in 2019, the government took over the land again. The key informants were asked if there was a winner in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict due to the seeming peace in the area since the government took over the piece of land in 2019. A key informant noted:

> The government only proposed to take over the land, which confirms that there was no winner. As we speak, the case is still in court and there are other forms of resolution, such as mediation by well-meaning Ghanaians and the National Peace Council, going on to enable us to transform the conflict (Interview with a resident, female, 7th May 2022, Nkonya)

The response suggests that there is no winner to the violent conflict that continues to threaten the peace and security of the area. As stated by Herath (2018), such conflicts do not produce a winner at any point. There is no clear military winner. These require local methods to be implemented and which must be reinforced from time to time. The spiritual value of the land and the link it provides between the living and the dead can be seen in the protracted nature if these identity conflicts laced with resource needs such as land and minerals. The

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key informants were also asked if the government take-over was a good resolution and one said the following:

> They have only planned to take over the land but have for the military school but they have not set up any foundation for any building. They have sent two cargo containers to Taayi and the people of Alavanyo have set fire in that area. The people of Taayi fight the fire when it tries to burn down the containers. That is why I said the government is not trying to resolve the conflict. Because if they were to build a military camp on the mountain, the conflict would have been over (Interview with a resident, female, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

From the narration by the key informant, there is every indication that the land has been taken over by the government but at present, the land has not been put to any use. There seems to be no plan of action by the government on what exactly to use the disputed land for. The taking over of the peace of land seem to be the best option at the time. This also put the conflict into a stalemate with no decision made and this put the parties into further suspicion and deepens the mistrust for each other. As it stands, there is no winner in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. Herath (2018) noted that intra-state or communal conflicts such as the Alavanyo conflicts do not produce a winner or a loser in most cases.

The issues emanating from the key interviews and the FGDs suggest that the Western mechanisms did not make room for the consideration of the cultures of both parties. A key informant narrated that:

> There are no traditions in their methods. They only used their own rules. Sometimes too their methods don't work. It is because of the government that the conflict still exists. We have the upper hand because we won the case in court. We have the plan for the land

while they do not (Interview with a resident, male, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

It can be inferred from the response that the Western mechanisms did not make room for the cultures or cultural practices of the groups except for mediation and negotiations which were traditionally composed using local or traditional leaders. In this situation, they become hybrid methods which are discussed in the next section. Regarding mechanisms such as litigation, commissions of enquiry and arbitration, cultural practices were not normally considered and used. The informant mentioned that the methods in the court did not work on some occasions and blamed the government for the protractedness of the conflict, but concluded that the Nkonya won the court cases against the Alavanyo. But to win the cases does not reflect in the whole issue as the conflict is in a stalemate currently where the parties avoid each other. There is a need for culture at this point as indicated in the conceptual framework for the study.

Hybrid mechanisms

Hybrid mechanisms are also developing within the peace literature and gaining recommendations and acceptance as a conflict-handling style according to the peacebuilding perspective (Adejumobi, 2004; Paris, 1997; 2004; Tongeren, 2013). Hybrid mechanisms, according to emerging thought, are more effective than the earlier two, Western or traditional mechanisms which are entirely pro one side against the other. The hybrid, however, combines the traditional and the Western mechanisms for a better outcome (Ibrahim, 2018).

One hybrid mechanism that was used in the past is mediation laced with libation pouring to invoke the presence of ancestors and invite them to partake in their deliberations and bear them witness. As seen earlier in the section on

indigenous mechanisms, the responses pointed to the reverends, bishops and pastors also allowed to partake in the libation pouring. They provided the drinks and sometimes, even led the pouring of the libation as part of the traditions of the people and this enhanced the sense of belongingness and recognition of both groups as it increased the respect and trust the people for them. During a KII, a regional peace council official narrated the following:

> We have a representative of the chiefs as a member of the council so it means that we are open to traditional beliefs, and we are very careful. Our dealings are such that even though am a pastor, when we meet today, we ask Muslims to pray and sometimes, we ask the traditionalist. We have African traditional beliefs as part of the council system and work since we have chiefs as council members. So, we allow any of them to pray (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

The response from the key informant tends to suggest that the dialogue meetings and libations were also poured. This National Peace Council allowed the prayer due to their composition also the parties present. The traditional prayers to the ancestors and gods invoke their presence, guidance and protection as they participate in the peace process. This gives them a sense of recognition as their forebears are consulted and they are present. It still provided the needed effect to the members of both groups. The residents and key informants indicated that before and during some of the formal or traditional mediation, negotiation or conciliation sessions, they sometimes poured libation to call on their ancestors and gods besides the Christian prayers.

They furthered that they engaged in singing traditional songs and dances among other customs that helped them to reconnect with their ancestral backgrounds. These cultural activities and cultural performances arouse a sense

of fulfilment as the people were involved and treated as equal partners and conditions were not created to result in mistrust or suspicions that could cripple the peace process.

This confirms the findings of Bukari (2013) and Yahaya et al., (2021) that some religious practices that are embedded in the cultures and traditions of conflicting groups appeal to their beliefs and grant a sense of recognition and they identify with the processes. Thus, the homegrown mechanisms and cultural practices have a lot to offer in the peace process. Azar (1990) mentions the recognition of individuals as a key component in resolving, managing and transforming protracted conflicts.

In an FGD conducted in Nkonya, the participants suggested an amalgamation of various mechanisms or methods in the past but mostly mediation was used. The Alavanyo opted to join their Ewe brothers in adjoining towns such as Saviefe, Akrofu and Sovie to celebrate their festivals and hold funeral celebrations among other reasons and this is avoidance, where the group leaders call for group closure to prevent further entry and also caution their members from interacting with the other groups. During the third-party mediation, the groups met at the District Security Council (DISEC, now Municipal Security Council [MUSEC]) in Hohoe to dialogue or at the District Security Council in Nkonya. At other times, they also met at the Regional Security Council in Ho.

There was also a mix of mediation with other mechanisms. Expert-led mediation or conciliation mechanisms were also used. Emmanuel Bombande of WANEP also led a team to facilitate peace between the parties but the mediation-arbitration committee was unable to complete their work due to

certain statements made which the Nkonya found offensive and they withdrew from the process. This supports Osaghae's (2000) view cited in Boege (2006, p. 17) that, "the relevance and applicability of traditional strategies have been greatly disenabled by the politicisation, corruption, and abuse of traditional structures, especially traditional rulership, which have steadily delegitimised conflict management built around them in the eyes of many and reduced confidence in their efficacy". Another mediation committee was the Boamah Committee which also recommended that the land should be taken over the piece of land or re-demarcate the land for equal benefit.

Challenges with the Mechanisms that were Used in the Past

The mechanisms and strategies employed so far have been associated with some challenges that made their use difficult and may have contributed to their failures besides the inherent problems associated predominantly with the Western mechanisms. The interviews and the FGDs suggested some setbacks, especially from the non-state actors such as the leaders of the communities, CSOs and NGOs. An official of a CSO narrated that:

> I believe strongly that the idea of engaging the victims of the conflict is a very laudable one if we can continue to pursue it. Something good may come out of that. Because, during the cause of the peace negotiations, there were a lot of ideas that came out. One of them is compensation, where all those who suffered any form of loss as a result of the conflict must be compensated and that requires funding. If we can look at that very well, we can begin healing the wounds and maybe some form of understanding may come now for them to look forward. So, the biggest challenge is funding (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

From the quotation above, the key informant seems to suggest that not all the affected parties have been considered and included in the mechanisms or the peace attempts. One important stakeholder, that has been sidelined from the process are the victims of the conflict. These are people who may have suffered losses such as of family, properties and livelihood. He suggests the need for compensation for the aggrieved parties. This, he believes will lead to healing and changes that can produce a positive outlook for peace. He also mentions the lack of funding another major setback with the mechanisms and which affects the effective and efficient implementation of the mechanisms and the terms of agreements or judgments. Another key informant is quoted below:

> Also, ineffectiveness on the side of state agencies and here I talk about security officers because these exploited products are transported in their raw form along the road to business operating centres at Hohoe, Kpando and Dambai. So, assuming there was effective monitoring on the road, I think seizures could have been done and arrests would be affected so these are stakeholders whose activities are obstructing the peace process (Interview with a REGSEC member, male, 27th May 2022, Ho).

Considering the response by this key informant, one can see many setbacks to the peace attempts and mechanisms employed to restore durable peace between the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups. He mentions state actors such as the police as those who are to monitor and effect the arrest of some of these characters but have not done so and this has given impetus to suspicions by the people who suspect that these institutions and agencies support these hidden faces such as timber merchants and Indian hemp cultivators, traffickers and distributors who transport these banned products to their markets for sale. Some residents and key informants in the previous

chapter have suggested that the police and army, with the support of political figures, may own these farms or support the owners and could be the ones who could transport these items without being detected and arrested. This suggests a breakdown in the state structures and institutions as a result of the protracted conflict in that part of the country.

A key informant enumerated some setbacks in the following quotation:

> Challenges have been there but, progress has also been recorded. It has always been limited stakeholder engagement as I don't think all the stakeholders have been identified and involved. I mean that we are talking about those who are exploiting the timber products and have not joined any of these deliberations as stakeholders. So, no matter the decisions that are taken, their interests and activities continue to drive the conflict. The National Peace Council was tasked to identify victims of the conflict from both sides and suggest appropriate compensation to the government but this is yet to be done. So currently, the business and economic interests of conflict entrepreneurs, the non-involvement of all stakeholders and the lack of compensation for victims are the what continues fuelling the conflict in the area (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th May, 2022, Ho).

The key informant in the quote above enumerated several challenges that hinder the process of restoring peace between the parties. According to him, the conflict entrepreneurs are not involved in the peace process as stakeholders in the conflict and so they engage in acts that threaten the peace in the area. They foment troubles that create insecurity in the area and deepen the cracks in the relations between the groups or communities and they continue to engage in their nefarious activities for financial or other gains. He adds that victims have

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to be compensated for their losses and for true conflict transformation to begin
and lead to the establishment of peace.

As another key informant indicated in an interview:

> We don't have a problem with the government again over any portion of the land but the government doesn't even know the size nor the exact place of the land over which we are fighting. The military and the government officials who are taking the piece of land, which part of the land are they taking? Are you taking the whole land or you are taking the whole Alavanyo land? That is our problem. If the government wants to take part of the land, for example, as was the case in 2015, the youth of Nkonya demonstrated and the late Amissah Arthur came to meet us in Kpando. He indicated the need for peacebuilding and used the late chief of Kpando, Torgbi Dagadu. Torgbi met the youth of both parties and asked the youth to work on peace as the future of their groups is in their hands (Interview with a resident, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

This resident shares views that emerged mostly from the FGDs held with
men in Alavanyo and Nkonya. There were previous attempts that were made to
take the land from both communities but that did not materialise. From the
quotation, people in government including people from the security agencies
do not even know the location of the piece of land and the size. If the
government wants to take over the land, which land is it taking? This informant
holds the view that the government has not done much to take over the land
meant for any meaningful use. There were attempts to re-demarcate the land
and that also failed. The government seems unsure of what to do to end the
conflict. Government's role is not clear in the attempts to find peace. These are
creating uncertainties in the minds of the people especially those whose

livelihoods depend on the land and the youth who are looking forward to securing employment in case government uses the land for the purported plan.

Some informants indicated that the government taking over the piece of land was positive but others also indicated the contrary. In the previous chapter, the REGSEC representative was not sure of the government taking over the land. This respondent also indicated that the government placed containers containing items to be used for the construction on the piece of land, but nothing has been done since that event. These are concerns noted by Azar (1990) for conflict to assume protractedness. Collier and Hoeffler (2002; 2004) state in their analysis of the satisfaction of economic needs of the parties for peace to be established as these members will not cooperate with the processes.

According to the indigenous wholistic theory (Absolon, 2010), before colonialism, non-European societies and for that matter, African societies, had their methods of healing their societies from social ills including conflicts. Impliedly, these societies had their tried and tested, homegrown conflict management, resolution, transformation and peacebuilding mechanisms. These are deeply embedded in indigenous knowledge and experiences of the people and are found to be resilient and passed down from a generation to the next (Absolon, 2010; Issifu & Bukari, 2022; Bukari, 2013). These were instituted and used for dealing with social upsets in society. The mechanisms are directed towards healing society from various ailments and violent escalations such as diseases and conflicts (Issifu, 2015; Poonwassie & Charter, 2005; Tsega, 2004).

These mechanisms or interventions are based on indigenous knowledge. But with the advent of colonialism and the aftermath, Western-centred or Eurocentric mechanisms were introduced and in most colonized societies, this

situation led to setting aside the local mechanisms. They were in most cases, completely replaced with the Western mechanisms and in some cases, infused into the indigenous or local or traditional mechanisms (Adjei & Adebayo, 2014; Abu-Nimar, 2003; Absolon, 2010; Ibrahim, 2018; Tsega, 2004).

Absolon (2010) in the medical wheel established the attachment indigenous non-Western people have with their land as they even consider it as a god whom they revered and could not wrong. They even attach spiritual connotations to it and therefore do not detach from it. Adjei and Adebayo (2014) also call for the deployment of indigenous, homegrown mechanisms that are rooted in their cultures to handle social ills such as diseases and conflicts since these non-Western societies also have their inbuilt mechanisms that have built resilience over time.

In cases where the conflict is violent, both Western-centred and indigenous mechanisms have been deployed together and on other occasions, they have been deployed differently to address the conflict. Despite these, the conflict in the area continues to recur and has become protracted, and in most of these cases, Western-centered mechanisms have been used and which have failed to deal with the issues (Agyei, 2023; Anumel et al, 2021; Asare, 2023; Duah, 2014; Ibrahim, 2018). This section explores the failures and examines ways that indigenous mechanisms can be used sustainably by emphasising the cultural practices and traditions of the conflicting parties. These include the involvement of the parties in choosing the best mechanisms to be adopted considering factors such as the type of mechanism and also the type of third parties that have to be selected to achieve peace.

Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed to examine the mechanisms that have been used in the past to find and restore durable peace between the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups. The chapter found that both indigenous home-grown mechanisms and Western-centered mechanisms were used at separate times to restore the cordial relationship that existed between the ethnic groups before the violent escalation and other times, combined in a hybrid style and used. The hybrid was not consciously done but, in most cases, it was an afterthought. Due to this, the mechanisms have not been sustainable in the cultural or traditional modes and are hardly included although, they tend to achieve more durable results.
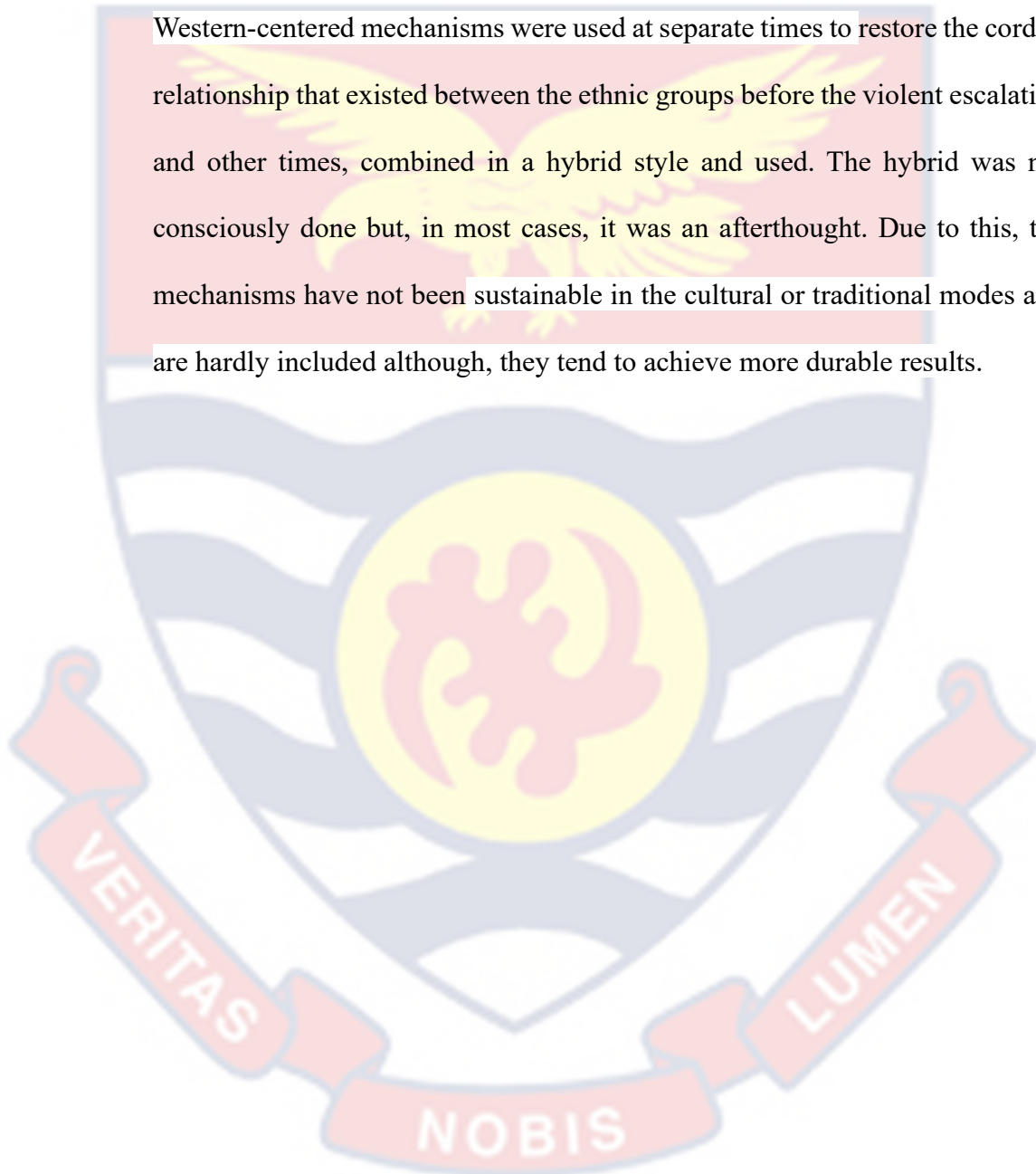
CHAPTER SIX

CULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE MECHANISMS USED DURING

PAST CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Introduction

This chapter seeks to analyse the cultural practices in the mechanisms that were used in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict resolution. The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict has spanned a century, and in the course of the conflict, various mechanisms have been used in anticipation of a sustainable end to the violence and to restore normalcy and peace to both ethnicities and their communities. In this chapter, the researcher investigated the past mechanisms, and how the mechanisms were acceptable to the parties. Though some of these mechanisms were successful, the peace did not last. The chapter also established that some of the mechanisms did not consider the cultures of both groups which left the conflicting parties dissatisfied and created stalemates. The last section focuses on the role of cultural practices in the mechanisms that were deployed to transform the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict.

Cultural Practices in the Mechanisms

Studies are showing a growing reliance on cultural practices or traditions that can offer immense relief to conflict practitioners as this has the propensity to lead to an amicable transformation of destructive conflict into constructive conflicts (Issifu & Bukari, 2022; Bukari & Osei-Kufuor, 2022; Ibrahim, 2018; Kenaw, n.d.). The need for culture cannot be overstated in the search for constructive ends to destructive conflicts (Abu-Nimar, 2003; Absolon, 1993; 2010; Anumel et al., 2021; Auvinen & Kivimäki, 2001; Duah, 2014; Kanu; 2017; Kenaw, n. d.; Lederach, 2014; Mavalla & Osah, 2017; Mensah et al.,

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2016; Osei-Kufuor & Bukari, 2022; Ramsbotham et al., 2017). In the indigenous wholistic theory, Absolon and Abu-Nimar emphasised traditional knowledge and local ways of solving societal problems. By extension, these include knowledge of peace, conflict and how to deal with the conflicts when they escalate. These traditional knowledge systems determine the cultures of the groups and societies and when culture is viewed as the engine of social change, a complete social transformation is achievable (Absolon, 2019; Kagan, 2018)

A key informant narrated the following concerning the use of indigenous mechanisms:

> We can say, what they did in the past worked. For many years, when the issue came again, the Reverends and Moderators used these methods and it worked until recently. They provided Schnapps, palm wine, and a cow for libation and sacrifices to be made by both groups to signify an end to the conflict. We did the traditional rites at the boundary. The Odikro met with one of the Alavanyo chiefs to perform the customary rites. They also took our daily uses and did the rites and libations were poured by both sides. Bishops Lodonu and Boamah were present to ensure that this time, curses were invoked so that we do not act against it and the peace lasted between 1983 and 2001. (Interview with an Assemblyperson, male, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

The quotation suggests the use of different cultural practices and a mix of mechanisms. Catholic and Evangelical Presbyterian Church Bishops were involved in the process. The mechanism was mediation mixed with negotiation, and cultural practices such as libation pouring amidst the invocation of curses being done using their daily uses such as clothes being mixed with other items. The Christian bishops participated in the rites which others may consider fetish and shy away from. This was to make the parties own the processes and also

trust that to abide by the decisions arrived at. This also made the parties accountable to the ancestors and the gods and stayed away from acts that would threaten the peace process. From the participant, the mechanisms worked and ensured peace for "many years" before the conflict recurred.

Differences in cultural backgrounds can also produce ambivalent outcomes. Instead of producing peaceful outcomes, it can also prolong the transformation process. The parties come to the table with their traditions–or culture–and the mediators put measures in place to understand and raise awareness on that and design ways that the cultures can be used positively to resolve the disagreement. Diversity is an asset and must be encouraged for all cultures to be brought on board thereby ensuring plurality, cultural enrichment and social cohesion (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2016).

However, in Alavanyo and Nkonya, not many differences existed in practices needed for conflict transformation despite some differences in traditions and practices. So, the practitioners did not face much problems when it came to adopting practices to promote transformation. The bishops engaged the parties for measures rites and practices that were common and these were used as indicated by McCormick (2005) that intercultural discussions enhance a smoother transformation. Conflict transformation will ensure interculturality and a plural cultural society where all cultures are expressed (Kagan, 2018; Kagan & Kirchberg, 2016; Schippers & Grant, 2016).

Regarding the boundary, the Nkonya have relied on the Gruner map which does not consider the traditions while the use of the trees which the Alavanyo, have insisted on using as the boundary between the two communities is traditional. The Alavanyo insist that the original boundary is the traditional *Anya*

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or *Ntomeh* tree boundary and call on the Nkonya to accept the use of this boundary created by their ancestors. In an interview with a Women's Leader, female, on 2nd May 2022, Alavanyo, it was indicated that *if they accept the border set by our ancestors with the Anya trees then there won't be any problem again*. To this informant, the acceptance of the traditional tree boundary will be the ideal solution to the impasse.

Issues emerging from an FGD conducted in Alavanyo suggest a mix of mechanisms were used in past conflict situations. Aside from all of these, churches and even the government have tried many mechanisms to make peace between the parties including celebrating festivals together, by participating in the other party's activities. Customary rites were performed where chiefs from both groups fired guns into the sunset to signify that there would not be any misunderstandings between the parties. The problem with the use of cultural practices was that the implementation did not go into detail.

As discussed in Chapter Five, several mechanisms have been deployed so far. First, the church stepped in to resolve the Alavanyo-Nkonya impasse using indigenous mediation mostly but they could do much about the situation. This was followed by the government stepping in to end the violence via mediation, negotiation, and arbitration at different times. Some local leaders such as chiefs from neighbouring communities and towns have also tried to resolve the impasse using mediation or negotiation (Asare, 2023). Parties to the conflict, the Alavanyo and Nkonya, on their own, have initiated dialogue to negotiate peace. There were other indigenous methods such as both groups celebrating festivals (Yam and SASADU festivals) together and customs and traditions being performed amidst the invocation of curses and punishments from the

ancestors, accompanied by certain rituals and finalised these with the act of shooting into the sunset to seal the peace rituals by both chiefs.

The FGDs indicated that the mechanisms were meant to achieve peace but the third-party stakeholders such as the government and CSOs such as the NPC and WANEP, did not reach deep to deal with the root causes of the conflict and thus, the failure of the mechanisms. This confirms the findings by Asare (2023) that the third-party interventions deployed and used for the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict did not go deep enough to result in the needed identity, human needs and issue transformation required for transformation of the conflict. The failure of the mechanisms to reach deep into the social fabric also explains the protractedness of the conflict. According to Lederach (1995; 2003), for a successful conflict transformation, there is a need for the mechanisms to reach deep into all the facets of society. The failure of this will be counterproductive.

Some respondents also mentioned communal eating as a traditional way of dispute settlement. Here animals are slaughtered, rites performed, food is prepared and all the parties are made to share in the meal. However, a key respondent held a different view regarding the use of indigenous mechanisms. He narrated the following:

> Let me say that, the customs are not enough to achieve peace but instead, they are performed to seal the peace in our culture after peace has been mediated between parties and an agreement is reached, they always slaughter a ram, pour libation and prepare a meal for them to eat together. (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

The quotation lists some cultural practices used in the past to deal with the conflict. The interviewee indicated that these practices are not the causes of

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the violence but believes these practices can be used as part of the mechanisms rather than concretise the agreements made for the parties to abide by to ensure the peace is maintained and that there is no relapse. To this respondent, rituals are performed, animals are sacrificed and a meal is made from the meat for the parties to eat together as a sign to seal the peace pact and deepen the bond of good relations and help enforce the terms of the peace pact. He notes that peace negotiation meetings target forgiveness where the parties forgive each other for the wrongs committed and live together in harmony.

The key informant confirms some issues regarding the indigenous wholistic theory. This is in the Western doorway and a little of the Northern doorway where indigenous or endogenous knowledge that is based on the traditions and values of their forebears is brought to bear on the Western. The informant talks about dialogue (which could be mediation) and after that rituals are performed to seal the peace pact (Absolon, 2019; Adebayo et al, 2014).

From the responses of the key informants, residents and FGDs, it is evident that both Western and indigenous mechanisms have both been deployed either separately or together at different times to address the episodes in the conflict but, the conflict between the two ethnic groups has relapsed and yet to be transformed (Anumel et al., 2021). This is the foundation for this project, that the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict can be sustainably transformed through a comprehensive application of culturally-informed transformation mechanisms by well-informed neutral third parties, leading the transformation process at the right time, and having adequate knowledge of the nature and type of conflict or initiated by the parties themselves (Asare, 2023; Osei-Kufuor & Bukari, 2022).

As indicated in earlier chapters, conflicts need to be transformed and durable peace restored, built on and made sustainable in conflict-prone societies. As a result, this study notes that many mechanisms such as courts or adjudication, mediation, arbitration, commissions of enquiry, and expert-led interventions by civil society, faith-based and non-governmental organisations, have been used in the past to end these violent, destructive and protracted conflicts (Adjei & Adebayo, 2014; Agyei et al, 2023; Anumel et al., 2021; Asare, 2023; Duah, 2014; Kendie et al, 2014; Mensah et al., 2016; Midodzi & Imoro, 2011). Some mechanisms produced some successes but only for a while, and other mechanisms such as litigation and arbitration sometimes failed just after the sessions ended and most of them ended in stalemates and soon after, the parties are back in arms (Ahiave, 2013; Bukari & Osei-Kufuor, 2022).

The main reason for the failures, according to key informants and issues emerging from the FGDs is that the groups felt that the mechanisms were not effectively deployed to cover most aspects of their societies, the cultural practices and traditions of the groups were missing or were afterthoughts and not done only once, the disputing parties did not trust the neutral parties and their decisions (Abu-Nimar, 2003; Absolon, 2013; Ibrahim, 2018). A factor that also fuels the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict and keeps it going for all these years is retaliation or revenge for past attacks and humiliations, failure to accept the verdict of the courts, as mentioned by some of the key respondents. Here, the traditional practices of the parties are relegated and this leads to dehumanising attitudes and attacks from both sides. The traditions have also been practised as a one-time event and this fails to keep the parties bonded for longer periods.

These findings confirm the views held by the proponents of the indigenous wholistic theory that most of the mechanisms used in these cases are mainly based on Eurocentric ideals, of which some presented zero-sum outcomes that do not consider the structure of the African society and relationships between the disputants. In the end, the parties end up not agreeing to many of the terms outlined at the dialogue meetings to restore peace.

Litigation and the role of the state in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict

Bearing in mind that the conflict has become protracted due to the failure of previous mechanisms that were deployed, the research found that some mechanisms used in the past are the courts where the Alavanyo and Nkonya adduced evidence to support their respective sides and the courts made judgments based on the evidence. These judgments were, however, rejected by the losing side in most cases. There were appeals but the losing party again rejected the outcomes. A representative of a CSO based in Accra narrated the following in an interview:

> Eventually, the case went to court and according to the court proceedings, the Nkonya won the case but that did not solve the conflict. So, it became some kind of annual conflict that happens, there are trends here that show that almost every year there were skirmishes from one of the sides and people are killed and so it has been to date. So that's like a summary of the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

The response above by this key informant mentioned the court as one mechanism that was used in the past. The respondent indicated that one of the parties was not satisfied with the ruling by the court and appealed the verdict and this continued. The conflict became an annual occurrence as the parties

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clashed and were invited by stakeholders to find peace but ended up attacking and counter-attacking each other leading to the destruction of lives and property (Agyei, 2023; Duah 2014; Gariba, 2017; 2023; Tsikata & Seini, 2004; GIZ, 2019). The court system contributed to the conflict becoming protracted as the rulings by the courts could not be enforced and where the losing group quickly appealed. This was because the litigation process was a zero-sum as it supported one side winning unlike in indigenous mechanisms which ensured win-win outcomes. At the court, the evidence was mainly the Gruner map (Plate 1) of 1913 which was drawn as a result of the 1897-1913 land encroachments and misunderstandings.

The map, according to one Nkonya historian, showed the boundaries between the six other states (including Alavanyo) that border the Nkonya state. This map was presented to the court and was admitted as evidence and based its judgments on it. However, the court ruling which on numerous occasions was in favour of the Nkonya was rejected almost immediately by the Alavanyo because the map did not capture the accurate boundaries and demarcations and was not based on the original boundaries as these were not followed by Dr Hans Gruner in mapping the area in 1913. In the FGDs conducted in Alavanyo did not see the need for the map drawn by colonialists to be the evidence on which decisions should be made. Thus, they did not commission or have any knowledge about the map and therefore questioned the motive of the Nkonya for adopting this map and wondered why they were not involved in the mapping process.

The FGDs in Nkonya supported the map and they saw it as the solution to the impasse. They see the lack of enforcement as unwillingness on the part

of the government and the courts to make the Alavanyo do the bidding of the court. The Nkonya believe the politicians/government have failed to make Alavanyo face the truth for fear of losing votes from the Alavanyo. They, instead, form mediation and other committees that are unable to solve the problem. Meanwhile, they expend state resources and deceive citizens that they are solving the problem. The Nkonya are convinced that if politicians let the Alavanyo know that they should continue paying homage to Nkonya, the conflict will end. The Nkonya believe that the Alavanyo cannot win the court cases without the required documents such as a land title or a map. They should return to the indigenous tradition of paying homage and acknowledge that they are the settlers and should be subject to the authority of the Nkonya regarding the use of the land.

The FGDs indicate the lack of political will to end the conflict. Some believe that the state (political leaders) may be making political capital and benefitting from the conflict and thus, avoid dealing with the conflict due to its sensitivity. The FGDs mentioned a possible reduction in electoral votes as the reason why successive governments are unwilling to tackle the issue. They use assurances of ending the violence and restoring peace when they win elections as a way of mobilising voters. This was a finding Tonah (2012) made in a study of the Dagbon conflict. Participants in another FGD in Nkonya also indicated the lack of political will to deal with the conflict and end it. They agreed that the politicians are even the cause of the protractedness of the conflict.

The FGDs suggest that the Nkonya consider the Alavanyo as the cause of the conflict because of the unwillingness of the Alavanyo to accept all six judgments by the courts. The Nkonya, however, see the court rulings as the

solution and which requires enforcement by governments who have failed to do so. They stated during the FGDs in Nkonya that all six judgments went in favour of Nkonya. The Alavanyo appealed against them but lost on all occasions. The Nkonya further argued that if the Alavanyo were the owners of the contested piece of land then they would have had the required documents and map to support their claim. It is rather the Nkonya who have a map and that lends credence to their claim as owners of the disputed piece of land.

Again, the payment of homage to the Nkonya by the Alavanyo is featured in the FGD for females and the interviews as well. To the Nkonya, the recognition to be derived as the overlords of the place through the payment of the homage was important to the transformation of the conflict. This confirms the process dynamics level of Azar's (1990) PSC theory. The groups have built-in mechanisms that are home-grown which they believe if applied can lead to the transformation of the conflict. But they blame the failures of the mechanisms on governments' lack of will to enforce them. The role of the state also plays out here (Beaudoin, 2013; Miall, 2004; Rhodes, 2008).

Indigenous mechanisms

The Alavanyo stated that the traditional or cultural method of boundary-making making where the leaders of the two neighbours meet and together planted the *Anya* or *Ntomeh* trees. The *Anya* or *Ntomeh* trees are planted on the boundaries of the clans or communities involved and these trees mark the boundaries between the groups or communities. From the histories presented by the Alavanyo, the ancestors of the Alavanyo and Nkonya used this style of indigenous boundary-making which was later ignored by the Nkonya. Based on the existence of the *Anya* or *Ntomeh* boundary, the Alavanyo have questioned

why the created ancestral boundary Nkonya have dropped it and are using the Gruner map. The planting of *Anya* or *Ntomeh* trees happens to be the tradition in Ghana and most parts of West Africa as indicated in oral traditions (Nukunya, 2003). They even indicated the same *Anya* Trees boundary existing between their community and the other communities such as the Gbi, Kpando and others. They have numbered the trees and the numbers are used to mark the boundaries between the states. The Anya trees claim was buttressed by other participants in the FGDs. A key informant also said the following:

> We share borders with the people of Gbi, Kpando, and Bowiri and we have not taken their land. There are Anya trees which serve as borders between all the six states…Why is it that, it is only the Nkonya that we, the Alavanyo, have boundary issues with? (Interview with a member of Council of Elders, male, 27th April 2022, Alavanyo).

The quotation by an Alavanyo Elder supports the view of the traditional boundary by their ancestors which is the planting of the *Anya* or *Ntomeh* trees. This practice is embedded in culture and traditions of the people especially for the Nkonya. This practice is cultural and holds values of respect for the ancestors and their ways, which the people identify with. The Alavanyo are of the view that the Nkonya had issues with them and wanted them out because these same traditional boundaries exist between the Nkonya and Alavanyo exist between the Nkonya and Gbi and Kpando which the Nkonya still respect but are not willing to abide by the one that exists between Alavanyo and Nkonya.

The quotation further gives credence to the original reason for the conflict as a land boundary dispute. This is borne out of the need for more space for farming and settlements and these have been at the root of the century-old

conflict. In the narration, the respondent suggests that they, the Alavanyo, are at peace with their other neighbours such as the Bowiri and Kpando except for the Nkonya. They also blame the Nkonya for being the cause of the protracted violent conflict while the Nkonya also blame the Alavanyo for the conflict for rejecting court rulings.

In another FGD conducted in Nkonya, the participants noted they gave their land to the Alavanyo who still live by them and are at peace with them and other groups bordering them. But they will not allow others to take their rightful inheritance; not until the homage is paid as a way of acknowledging that they are the owners of the land.

However, in another FGD conducted in Alavanyo, the participants stated that just as other communities or societies that exist now once had people around before others came to join. So, they, the Alavanyo, also took a journey to their present home. For their neighbours to claim they cannot have the right to benefit from the land and resources in the land is just unfortunate. There were cocoa large timber, cola and coffee plantations but this doesn't exist anymore because of the misunderstanding between the two towns.

As seen from the discussion so far, the traditional or local boundary-making using the *Anya* or *Ntomeh* was one of the cultural mechanisms used in the past. Although the Alavanyo believed this was the solution to the problem while the Nkonya on the other hand do not consider this mechanism to be the best way. The Nkonya find the court rulings as the best outcome since it offers them complete takeover and access to that piece of fertile land. This is however not a good way of transforming the conflict and restoring lasting peace.

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The government should explore the payment of homage to the bit again since it suits the traditions of the parties. May be a one-time payment by the Alavanyo supported with resources from the state, and the traditional trees boundary enforced, but to be marked by annual celebrations as a form of revitalisation of the culture and successes chalked in this regard. Here, a separate festival can be instituted and the tradition of shooting into the sunset will also be done every two years to mark the occasion. The parties invite all citizens to eat, play songs and dance in celebration together. Intermarriages can also be encouraged to continually blur the lines between the ethnic groups.

Local mediation, negotiation, conciliation and other mechanisms

From the beginning of the impasse in 1897, the groups used negotiations initiated by their chiefs and their traditional councils (Asare, 2023; Tsikata and Seini, 2007). This is immersed in cultural or traditional values such as respect for elders, and religious and traditional leaders. In traditional cultural settings, endogenous knowledge systems admonish that you listen to your elders when they speak to you. When they address disagreements, this is expected to end the differences (Aikins, 2012; Yahaya et al., 2021). It was later immersed in mediation. In later episodic escalations, these mechanisms have been used to end the violence that has characterised this conflict and peace was restored. A key informant said:

> My father was the first person they beat up and killed in 1983. The conflict continued with shootings until Father Tawiah came in to resolve the issue and there was peace between us. When Father Tawiah was transferred, the conflict came again; you could go to the farm and not return. We are not like that; we don't cross their borders to their place but they cross to our side. Whoever has a farm close to them is killed, that is the conflict between us. The

government, military and police came to talk to us. (Interview with a linguist, male, 29th May, 2022, Alavanyo).

The narration portrays the informant as a direct victim of the conflict and the narration sounded personal. He mentioned the application of various mechanisms by the stakeholders to restore lasting peace between the parties. The first mechanism to be cited in the quotation is a mediation led by a local Christian religious leader, who was well-known and respected in the area and beyond. As a catholic clergyman, Reverend Tawiah's mediation attempts restored some level of peace between the two communities. The approach used by the Reverend was mediation mixed with conciliation through dialogue.

Cultural elements or values such as respect for the elderly, ancestors and their gods and the recognition of the parties and their issues were considered and addressed. Libations were poured during dialogue sessions. The finding is in tandem with that made by earlier studies (see Asare, 2023; Anumel, 2021; Kendie et al., 2014; Midodzi & Imoro, 2011). Lederach (1995; 2014) indicated that conflict transformation works through face-to-face dialogue which can be led by a third party when the conflicting parties are unable to initiate the process themselves. Kenaw (n.d.) also made a similar finding in the *Woreda* conflict in Ethiopia, that mediation was central to transforming the protracted identity conflict. The leadership of both ethnic groups involved and engaged the masses.

Another level of mediation was the type led by the Volta Regional House of Chiefs (RHoC). This RHoC sits in Ho to hold hearings. It is made up of paramount chiefs of paramountcies in the region. It is mediation cum arbitration. This was also fashioned close to the Western or European type that is facilitated by the courts. It made it somewhat difficult for traditional or

cultural practices such as pouring libation not possible as the sitting takes place in formal spaces in the form of a court that make it impossible to do so. They could not pour libations to invoke the presence of their ancestors and gods. The people felt their cultural practices and traditions had been neglected but were sometimes considered during the implementation of the decisions, especially during durbars and festivals as part of the transformation processes. This confirms earlier KIIs and FGDs that the traditions and cultural practices become after-thoughts and are mostly used at the end of the process and not during or as the process. A resident narrated:

> So, they went to some meetings at the House of Chiefs in Ho, they set up a committee between Nkonya and Alavanyo, and they went there to talk about issues but they did not perform our rites and traditions. They, however, planned some festivals and we all met and enjoyed the programme at the disputed boundary. So, we all go and participate and do the same things and celebrate the peace agreement (Interview with Youth/resident, female, 5th May 2022, Alavanyo).

The response from the key informant and FGDs indicated some of the mechanisms were traditional and therefore cultural. The quotation points to the unifying role of cultural practices in the traditional mechanisms used in the past. The parties allowed their differences to be merged and participated in transformation activities such as festivals held at the site under contestation. Though the indigenous homegrown mechanisms did not last, they did much longer than when the Western mechanisms are solely deployed. The mechanisms are discussed below together with quotes from the key informants and issues from FGDs. However, the responses by the key informants implied that the mechanisms did not involve much of their tradition. A key respondent also said:

The Anya trees serve as borders but the Nkonya said they don't believe in it. So, we asked that every ethnic group construct a road around their lands. After a month or two, they constructed the roads by the borders of Santrokofi and Bowri. But the Nkonya refused and used rocks as boundaries. Their forefathers consulted our first paramount chief called Tse Doe and they planted the Anya trees together and these formed the boundary. A misunderstanding happened in the chief's palace, where one Nkonya man hit the head of our linguist. So, if anyone tries to bring about peace, they refuse. I have come to see that the those who come to settle the conflict do not support us. They love the Nkonya more than us (Interview with a Chief, male, 29th April 2022, Alavanyo).

The narration of this key informant described the relationship between Alavanyo and Nkonya. The informant mentioned issues such as the traditional boundary and mechanisms that have been used in the past. One was the construction of roads around the land which are to be used as boundaries. This was not acceptable to all the Nkonya. The roads could serve as a link road connecting both communities which was welcomed by all the parties.

The quotation further suggests that the Alavanyo are suspicious of the mechanisms that have been used to transform the violence that has characterised the relationship between the parties. They have not seen changes happening through existing mechanisms that disadvantage them and which they consider to be unsatisfactory to them (Asamoah, 2014). Though later, a link road was constructed between the Alavanyo and Nkonya communities to facilitate the movement of residents between both communities, it is not being used today due to the conflict. Roads, as tools for development, promote trade transactions between them and foster good neighbourliness and enhance development by meeting the needs of the people (Collier & Hoffler, 2002).

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He also mentioned the issue of they, the Alavanyo not being liked and trusted enough when they report past atrocities against them to the authorities. They are made to seem like they are making issues or blaming the Nkonya for nothing. This unfair treatment can create mistrust in the Alavanyo as they pull away from the process and this hampers transformation (Dudouet, 2007; Miall, 2004). The dissatisfaction of the parties has contributed to the rejection of the terms of peace as they felt sidelined or not fairly treated during the peace process and the situation resulted in the protractedness of the conflict as noted by the PSC theory (Azar, 1990; Azar & Farah, 1984). Azar calls for equal treatment of parties for a comprehensive transformation of the conflict which Dudouet (2007 corroborates. The groups keep hoping and searching for alternative ways to establish durable peace since the situation has become a burden for both communities.

Another cultural practice that was used in the past to establish peace among the disputing parties was the reciprocal participation in the party's festival celebrations by the other and the attendant show of solidarity through the exchange of tokens. The Alavanyo celebrated the Sasadu festival while the Nkonya celebrated the Yam festival. The exchange of gifts was considered by the Alavanyo as a token but the Nkonya considered it as a payment of homage or tribute to them by the Alavanyo. This came out strong in the narrations by the key informants in the interviews and also in the focus groups from both communities. This issue was also interpreted to mean a show of imbalances in power inherent in the relationship between both communities which holds a lot for peace and the transformation of the protracted Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict. The ensuing narration was quoted from a key informant:

From the issues, you can see that it's a conflict of who is who. Who is the senior? Who should pay homage to who? 'We are the Nkonya and the ones the Alavanyo should respect as the owners of the land'. Technically we'll look at it as being a conflict over land, or a conflict over water but, it's a conflict of "who's the boss?" That is the way it's looking. The Alavanyo were the ones to kowtow to the people of Nkonya as their masters. The Nkonya want to show that they are the masters, and that, whatever they say, the Alavanyo should respect and obey (Interview with an Official of a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

This determined who was in charge of the area as the minority or settlers struggled for more and equity and the majority or indigenes felt they should be in control (Azar, 1990; Dudouet, 2007; Miall, 2004). This culminates from the firstcomer or latecomer stories and claims to legitimise the issue of who is the overlord and who is subordinate. But both groups as seen from the previous as not ready to be subordinate to the other. There is a need to balance the power and both sides treated equally to enhance the achievement of transformation of the conflict.

Intermarriage was one cultural strategy or practice used to transform the protracted conflict and encourage brotherliness between the Alavanyo and the Nkonya conflict, although, it may not be a conscious strategy designed and adopted. As was noted in the earlier chapters, intermarriages existed between the ethnic groups over several decades though it is currently, frowned upon by both groups. Though this is not a planned measure in any mechanism, it was encouraged to help restore peace but its encouragement and acceptance can be a good tool as found by Francis (cited in Giddens, 1989). The interveners used the opportunity to ask the parties not to frown on interactions such as this.

Despite the groups being cautioned to stay away from each other, including choosing partners from the other community. Both groups have broken all ties and ceased interactions with each other on group levels, although some of them indicated that they visit family members and attend funerals among others in the other ethnic group's community. An informant stated in an interview that:

> So, everything ended peacefully. The people of Nkonya started life, living peacefully with the people of Alavanyo again. They married each other, attended the funerals in the other community and did everything in common once again. Life became normal as they celebrated festivals and invited each other where one does not recognise the differences among them (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

In the interview quoted above, the informant indicated that although they were supposed to close their ranks to prevent new entries and mixing with the Nkonya they still intermingled and intermarried. Avoidance or closing the groups was to restrict further interaction between members of the respondent's group with members of the other group. Marriages especially of their females mean more children for the other side which may count against them. They therefore will not attend or are willing to be present at any of such occasions. But a youth who was interviewed had a counter view of the situation as he indicated that they indeed, intermarried and dated across the divide. He narrated:

> At first, they visited anytime one group was celebrating their festival, and the other visited and partook in the celebrations. I even learnt they used to exchange girlfriends. Yes, intermarriage happens here a lot... I am an example of a product of an intermarriage between the groups. Even, my great-grandmother got married to an Alavanyo man and there are several examples of intermarriage between the Nkonya and the Alavanyo. I believe this has kept the

conflict from escalating into an all-out destructive war with casualties. This is because, when you take a weapon, you may kill a family from the other side (Interview with a resident, female, 27th April 2022, Alavanyo).

In an FGD too, the groups indicated a breakdown of communication and all forms of interaction with the other group at the group levels but maintained that at the individual levels, there are still intermarriages between members of the two ethnicities. It is believed by many that intermarriages may be the reason why there has not been a full-scale war between both groups.

In another interview, the informant also mentioned that another mechanism used in the past for the resolution or transformation is the deployment of officers of the security agencies, in the communities and areas surrounding the disputed piece of land. The respondent stated:

> Some time ago, there was a suggestion to use the land for a different purpose. I was even tasked to write a proposal regarding that. There was a plan to set up a military camp here, where the youth from both sides (Nkonya and Alavanyo) would be involved. This was intended to promote unity among the two factions while maintaining the peace and stability in the area… We have plenty of land between Nkonya and Alavanyo. If you go to that area, there are lands where even Honourable Peter Amewu, [MP for Hohoe], built a Police Station there. The presence of the police station in that area could bring stability (Interview with an Assembly person, male, 5th May 2022, Alavanyo).

This quotation from the interviewee talks about the government stationing officers of the army in the disputed land to maintain order, keep the combatants from attacking each other, and counter the attacks. A police station was also sited by the then Energy Minister who hails from Hohoe, a neighbouring town

to both groups, on the disputed piece of land between both groups to enforce law and order in the area.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the government finally decided to establish a military school on the disputed piece of land to serve as a training base for the Ghana Armed Forces. It will also serve as a military post which will enhance checks on both communities and their citizens to prevent further clashes as the military and police presence in the area is already known and they have been used to enforce government decisions such as curfews on the Alavanyo and Nkonya when there were clashes between them (Anumel et al, 2021; Duah, 2014; Midodzi & Imoro, 2013; Penu & Osei-Kufuor, 2016; Tsikata & Seini, 2004).

Finally, as can be seen in some cases where non-state actors clash over some resources, the state takes steps to take over the resources. Before this, as stated in the previous chapters, there were earlier recommendations for the government to take the land and use it as a forest reserve and for scientific research. The government took over and deployed troops into the reserve but this could not be implemented. In 2019, after clashes in the area resulted in the death of two people, the government of Ghana again stepped in to take the disputed piece of land. There were recommendations for the government to use the reserve for a forest reserve among others. A key informant said:

> In 2019 the government made it clear that they were taking over that piece of land to build a military base and secondly, a military school. How far with this, whether it's been done or not done and secondly is it a sustainable way of looking at this particular conflict or trying to bring transformation to this conflict (Interview with a REGSEC member, male, 26th April 2022, Ho)

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Another key informant also said:

> I think it was one of the options recommended to address the issue. And for us when it came up, we thought it wasn't a bad idea but this has to receive acceptance by both parties in conflict. Once the two are consulted enough to come on board, then the matter can be resolved. But that is not exhaustive as it depends on what…it is used for. But if it is used for a military base and it can yield dividends to both ethnic groups then why not? So that is the position I remember our board then took (Interview with an Official of a CSO, male, 17th May 2022, Accra).

However, this REGSEC member held a contrary position. He said:

> The information that the government has taken over the land is not true. The government has rather forbidden the groups from engaging in any economic activities such as farming, palm wine tapping, and timber logging on the disputed land. That is why the military and police teams are there. It is named "Operation Ahodwo" which translates as the prevalence of peace (Interview with a REGSEC member, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

The quotation above suggests that the government has not taken over the land but instead has deployed security officers to prevent residents and members of the two ethnic groups from going into the forest for any reason to prevent further clashes among them. From the responses, it can be concluded that the conflict is not over but has rather become protracted with violent episodes from time to time, based on suspicion and resulting from mistrust resulting from past experiences of attacks and reprisal attacks. This resolution mechanism, peacekeeping, only deploys the state security officers to maintain peace in the communities. This does not factor in the traditional values and practices of disputants which is a major characteristic of Western approaches except for mediation in some cases.

As evident from the interviews, the FGDs also suggest that culture was silent in the mechanisms. Issues that emerged in the FGDs also suggest a mix of mechanisms being used at different points in past conflict situations. In FGDs in Nkonya, the payment of homage is featured. The Alavanyo did pay some time ago but stopped along the line when the issue of amalgamation of the groups came up in peace discussions. The Alavanyo opted to join the other neighbouring Ewe groups of Saviefe, Akrofu and Sovie and this resulted in the institutionalisation of the SASADU festival. That resulted in the stoppage of the payment of the homage to the Nkonya. Regarding the traditional or cultural way of resolving this issue many things have been done. The groups have met many times at MUSEC at Hohoe, DISEC at Nkonya, and REGSEC at Ho. There were mediation meetings at Ho. At these meetings, representatives of both groups are put together to work and suggest ways of resolving the impasse. The Nkonya FGDs suggest that the Alavanyo should learn to respect and accept the existing boundary between the Nkonya and Alavanyo based on the Gruner map.

Also, commissions of enquiry were set up and other forms of arbitration have been used. Mr Bombande of WANEP, Dr David Livingston Boamah Mediation Committee, and Rt. Rev. Bishop Akwesi Mantey, Mrs Gbedemah, and others were members. The Nkonya and Alavanyo were asked to propose a settlement as to how peace could be achieved and the Alavanyo suggested the land be taken over by the government and used to establish something that could benefit the two sides while the Nkonya suggested that the parties abide by the original Gruner map.

The FGDs further suggest that both traditional or indigenous home-grown methods and Western methods dominated the methods. The mechanisms make

it apparent that a plethora of mechanisms were used in attempts to deal with the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. Expert-led mediation was followed by eminent person-led mediation. The traditional mechanism of paying homage to the Nkonya by the Alavanyo features paramount, followed by the insistence that the rulings made by the courts must be enforced.

Indigenous knowledge available determines the mechanisms that are adopted and the mechanisms are also determined by the approaches such as conflict transformation or peacebuilding which are embedded in the cultures of the groups (Kagan, 2010). The indigenous wholistic theory notes the failures of the social system especially in traditional African societies on the use of mechanisms external based on Western-centred meanings and ideas. These developments were the result of years of colonization which dispossessed people of non-Western societies of their knowledge and links to their environments (Absolon, 2010; Tsega, 2004). The plethora of mechanisms and the myriads of mechanisms deployed in the course of the century-old conflict, tells the vast array of indigenous knowledge that is embedded in the societies and the people selected at various points to lead the peace process.

This over-reliance on the Western mechanisms despite their failures and the intractability of the conflict situation has estranged the self from the levels (social, political, economic, and historical) of their society and made the mechanisms inapplicable and valueless for people in non-Western societies (Abu-Nimar, 2003; Adebayor et al., 2014). The indigenous wholistic theory states that, as a result of shelving the indigenous ways of doing ways and indigenous knowledge, has created a gap between local problems and the Western solutions that are prescribed (Absolon, 2010). The people are therefore

alienated from the mechanisms which have created situations where the people consider the mechanisms as being foreign and thus, fail in their application in traditional societies in Africa and are responsible for the unending cycles of conflicts. This has been established in Chapter Five which examined the past mechanisms that were used in past to resolve or transform the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict.

Inclusion of Tradition in the Mechanisms that were used in the Past

Considering the issue of tradition and how much tradition can be involved in the mechanisms, it came out that tradition had no role to play in litigation. The responses above suggest the court system is based on formal or laid down procedures which pay no attention to relationships and informal arrangements. This also makes the one with proof the victor and not necessarily the right person or the one telling the truth. A key respondent said:

> Yes, I have a challenge with our court system, where a lot of technicalities are introduced and where these technicalities sometimes trample on the truth. That is why I think many conflicts cannot be resolved because of these technicalities. So, I also share the same view with you. In our traditional setup…normally it is our chiefs and elders who settle issues and make sure that things go well. The technicalities in the court system hide the truth. Jesus said 'Say the truth and the truth shall set you free'. But when you use too many technicalities to overcome the truth we will still be fighting (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

Regarding the quotation, the key informant is of the view that the court system or litigation relies heavily on technicalities that do not make room for traditional or informal ways of doing things. Adjudication is structured in such a way that the system has the propensity to stifle the truth in the name of these

technicalities. As indicated by the indigenous wholistic theory by Absolon (1995), Europeanisation culminated in sidelining or relegating the indigenous or traditional system and no allowance is made for indigenous ways which emanate from the people and their home-grown ways and experiences. As a result, libation is not poured to invoke the presence of their ancestors and their gods who gave them the local or traditional ways. Indigenous languages are not used as English is the major medium of exchange which is sometimes then translated and which could lead to meanings being lost among other reasons (Adjei & Adebayo, 2014).

Regarding the use of culture and its importance to the peace process, an informant also narrated the following:

> You know our culture, the people, the youth believe in our culture. So, when we meet, we pray to the gods, pour libation to our ancestors, and we dance our traditional dances. We tell our histories and a family. But when the commission stays in Accra, Kumasi and invites some people there to go and dialogue, these things are left out, but when they come and know that this is what we do in our culture, and this is what the Alavanyo also do then we work together but some of them do not use these. When both groups work together, it works perfectly. So, it shouldn't be like, oh a committee has been formed, so let's go to Accra to resolve the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict, then we leave culture here. It is very perfect when we merge all these things (Interview with a Women's leader, female, 2nd May 2022, Nkonya)

An examination of the use of negotiation and the use of cultural or traditional practices suggests that where the conflicting parties, that is. the chiefs and people initiated and led the process, they were able to include some cultural practices and traditions in the mechanism. They invoked the presence of the

gods and the ancestors. But depending on the views of the negotiator they sometimes invoke the gods and the ancestors in cases where the process is initiated by a negotiator whether initiated at the non-state or state level.

These above situations impacted the outcomes and how the people feel connected to the process or otherwise (Absolon, 2010; Tsega, 2004). McCormick (2005) noted that spirituality must receive much consideration in the healing processes and practices such as spiritual knowledge which embodies the awareness and understanding philosophies of indigenous people. This raises awareness regarding the need to respect the sacred world which is important to indigenous peoples mostly found in non-Western societies. McCormick adds that the Western doorway of the Medicinal wheel is that indigenous people have a cultural history that has worked for them and which predates colonization.

In the cases where mediation was used the parties and the process were led by others who were appointed or selected to facilitate peace and where their lawyers were present, they were unable to include their cultural adherences or traditional ways.

Effects of Cultural Strategies on the Conflict

Cultural strategies have played significant roles in the mechanisms that have been used in the past as was seen in mechanisms used elsewhere such as in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Nigeria, Pakistan and India. Some of the roles that have been enumerated so far include, ownership of the process, a sense of belonging, increased trust or trustworthiness, and creation a sense of inclusion of their ancestors or forebears. These roles, among other issues, are discussed in the next section.

Belongingness and ownership

When parties to a disagreement are given a fair hearing and allowed to participate fully in processes that make them vent and also express their views on a possible solution, they feel a sense of ownership of the process and also the restoration of the peace after the escalation of conflicts (Absolon, 2010, Ibrahim, 2018; Kanu, 2017). The conflict transformation approach emphasises the need for the involvement of the parties in the process. The approach emphasises the relationships between the parties and the need for the use of the resources found in that society (Lederach, 2014; 2003; Goetschel, 2009). Absolon in the indigenous wholistic theory also backs the need for the participation of the local people in the processes leading to the transformation of the violence and the terms of the agreement reached are binding on them. They, therefore, are expected to abide by them if they did not have any qualms with any event in the processes leading to the final decision either by both parties alone or with the aid of a neutral third party, thus, a mediator, negotiator, arbitrator or intermediary.

According to Avruch (2006), the parties to the conflict feel a sense of ownership as they are consulted to participate in the process towards resolution and not others outside their culture (traditions, customs and values) dumping what they think is appropriate on them.

Trustworthiness

In an interview, the key informants indicated that the parties do not trust each other for not attacking their people and so the parties are continuously suspecting each other of fomenting trouble. It is asserted that using cultural adherences and customs during conflict situations has a way of building trust

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between the conflicting parties. It emphasises sameness and feelings of brotherliness among the conflicting parties and this in turn reinforces the need to reconsider their positions and work together towards peace. From the responses by the interviewees and the FGD participants, it is apparent that both sides enumerated the fact they were brothers due to intermarriages which were allowed in the past and which have in a way blurred the differences that existed before their living side by side. They mentioned sameness in festival celebrations with minor differences but mostly shared similarities in most beliefs and traditions which were in some cases expressed differently.

Involvement of ancestors and deterrence

It also came out in the interactions with the key informants, residents and local leaders of the Alavanyo-Nkonya communities that the involvement of their ancestors in the processes made them feel that their ancestors were part of the process as the piece of fertile 6,300-acre land that is in contention is an inheritance that was bequeathed to them by their ancestors. The decision to give a part or whole of the piece of land required their involvement and thus, their invocation. The pouring of libation, shooting into the sun and other practices gave them a sense of fulfilment and connection to their forebears. This attested to the fact that local mechanisms rooted in their cultures and traditions achieved longer peace times than they have experienced.

The deterrence follows from the invocation of curses and other forms of punishment which they expect to be meted to them, should they disobey the peace agreements adopted in the presence of all the stakeholders and in the presence of their ancestors and gods. There is the belief that these punishments

the individual calls for themselves will befall the one who takes up arms and whose actions cause mayhem.

As noted in the African cosmovision, the universe is seen in natural, human and spiritual spheres where land and spirituality are woven into existence (Absolon, 2019; McCormick, 2005). One requires other people to exist as *Ubuntu* philosophy which emphasises brotherliness. The land issues are traditional, customary and spiritual in many communities in Africa and Ghana. These cannot be dissociated from the attempts to resolve the conflict and thus their involvement.

Cultural Practices and Conflict Transformation

The study was premised on the view that culture has a vital role to play in the sustainable transformation of protracted conflicts due to rising literature on the importance of indigenous or local mechanisms and their effectiveness in ending violence and restoring peace (Absolon, 2019; 2010; Adejumobi, 2004; Adjei & Adebayor, 2014; Lederach, 1995; Miall, 2004; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Tsega, 2004). The researcher inquired from the key informants if traditions or culture or cultural practices can help transform the violent protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict and the participants in Alavanyo indicated that their culture can only contribute to transformation if there is an understanding between the two groups or communities. Misunderstandings cannot contribute to transformation or resolution.

In another FGD in Nkonya, the participants also made a counterclaim to the successes of the culture claim participants noted that culture has been used on two occasions in the past, but the blatant disrespect or disregard for their people has made it that they do not even respect the customs, let alone to talk

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about bishops, lawyers and other relevant people. All these people intervened but it is still not yielding positive results. So, they suggested the government, being the third party come in to take possession of the land from the two towns, it would work. The place must be placed under guard to prevent the Alavanyo people from going there. They can give reports on issues at the place, but I think that will rather work.

From the responses in the interviews and issues emerging from the FGDs, culturally informed mechanisms have been used in the past which failed due to the disregard for the decisions that were reached by the parties and the political elites in government. Although the government has tried taking over the piece of 2003 and 2007 which was unsuccessful, there is a popular belief among some stakeholders that if the takeover is implemented effectively, it will lead to the efficient transformation of the conflict. This view is however not shared by the key informants selected for the research. The idea of a government takeover, though espoused by both ethnic groups, it was also more prominent in the Nkonya community than in the Alavanyo community.

But this idea was initially proposed by the Alavanyo which the Nkonya opposed (Duah, 2014). This turnaround can be based on the fact that the Nkonya have large tracts of land which they can fall on but the Alavanyo consider this piece of land very important to their survival as farmers and hunters whose livelihoods depend on the land. Absolon (2019; 2010) made this assertion on the indigenous wholistic theory by noting that land is tied to the livelihoods of indigenous societies.

Chapter Summary

The chapter focused on analysing the cultural practices in the mechanisms used in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. Many of such were used such as speaking of a local dialect, the performance of customs followed by shooting into the sunset, intermarriages which literature supports to help blur the ethnic divide, indigenous or local mediation, negotiation, and arbitration among others. The cultural practices contributed greatly to ensuring longer periods of peace between the parties. The parties identified with the processes and participated fully in them. Regarding the role of cultural strategies in the mechanisms used to resolve the conflict between the Nkonya and the Alavanyo, it was found that though culture has featured in some of the mechanisms that were used, it was an afterthought. The use of culture in the area for peace led to increases in trust, created a sense of ownership of the process, a sense of belongingness and increased trust among others. In situations where they were used, they elicited emotions that moved the parties towards peace but they were not repeated.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TRANSFORMING PROTRACTED SOCIAL CONFLICTS:

CULTURAL STRATEGIES TO END THE ALAVANYO-NKONYA

CONFLICT

Introduction

This study is geared towards finding answers to ending protracted conflicts through indigenous or traditional conflict transformation mechanisms for the restoration of durable peace. This chapter assesses the potential of cultural strategies to restructure the relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people. Here, the researcher focuses on the cultural practices or traditions that can be used to transmute the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. The next section focused on selected cultural practices that were considered for mending the broken relationship including arts (sculpture), belief in ancestors, language, customs and values, festival celebrations, marriage, music and dance, and libation pouring. The third section discusses the changes that have occurred and which require transformation and the final section is on the transformation at the personal, relational, structural and cultural levels in the Alavanyo-Nkonya societies as depicted in the big picture of conflict transformation.

Cultural Practices and Mechanisms to Transform the Alavanyo-Nkonya Conflict

It has been noted that cultural practices can play integral roles in conflict transformation. Over the period various mechanisms have been used in a myriad of attempts to end violence and restore durable peace between conflicting parties. Mechanisms that can be used to end the violence that has characterised

the protracted social conflicts vary depending on the parties and the areas of convergence and divergence in their cultures (Tsega, 2004).

But in the case of protracted identity conflict that is laced with issues of access to and control of resources or human needs such as the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict, there is the need to consider issues that are core to their identity. These are mostly cultural practices that both parties to the conflict have used in their daily activities and which are common to both parties and which produce a common value to both of them. The researcher asked the key informants in the interviews if culture or cultural practices and traditions can be used for the transformation of conflicts. Responses were in the affirmative but with some exceptions. Key informants were asked about the potential for culture to transform the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. A key informant narrated:

> Culture can be used to achieve transformation but this depends greatly on the timing. Right now, it will not work, but with the insider peacebuilders groups that have been formed and when we promote it well, it will. So, it will work in the future because it is from there that we will start introducing some other things. The same thing was done with the Peki and Tsito land issues and it came where they had a meeting at Tsito, the Peki group travelled to Tsito and have a meeting with the Tsito insider peacebuilders. They perform rites and pour libations, cook local dishes and eat and hold the next meeting at Peki where the Tsito insider committee members also travel to Peki. That's what they did to change mindsets, attitudes and behaviours. So, that can be done for the Alavanyo-Nkonya to change their mindsets. It is possible depending on the right timing (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

The quotation from this key informant seems to confirm that there is the need for preliminary meetings with insider peacebuilding committees before the

implementation of the large-scale transformation activities for both groups is done. This committees are made up of a select few from each group that are tasked to represent their people at mediations and also conscientize their people on the importance of peace and also relay information on the progress made to their people. The timing is the reason why the informant feels the transformative activities must be delayed until later. In the literature, Zartman (2001) indicated the right time for interventions to be implemented which he referred to as ripeness. Interventions may be right but if it implemented at a bad time in the conflict, the mechanisms may fail (Coleman et al., 2008). Timing is key and this is when both parties are willing and ready to allow for dialogue and peace initiatives and interventions must be deployed at this point.

Communal eating is also embedded in the traditions of the people which signifies the letting go of divisive tendencies. It is believed that sharing food from the same source after conflicts is a sign of forgiveness and peace-making. The parties come together and cook and distribute among themselves. Eating together is also a key mode of transforming violence especially when the groups meet to dialogue as it serves to bridge the gaps that have resulted from the conflict as they avoid each other. In the approach of the eminent chiefs in Ghana, the Abudu and the Andani gates who were parties to the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis, ate together during the post-conflict dialogue sessions. In Alavanyo and Nkonya, both groups in the interviews and FGDs suggest their tiredness and readiness for the conflict to be transformed and peace restored. They want to trade as their livelihoods have been lost to the conflict.

However, another key informant narrated the following when asked about the culture and conflict transformation:

> Yes, it can lead to transformation of the conflict but, in this case, there is a high level of mistrust that has developed over the years due to the violent conflict. This has created a situation where the conflict has gone beyond just a conflict between Alavanyo and Nkonya (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

Considering the quotation, though the respondent thinks that cultural practices can lead to a transformation of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict but, the respondent was not positive about the prospects of culture to aid in transforming the negative protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict due to mistrust between the parties over the period. Mistrust negatively affect peace attempts as was noted by Ateng et al (2018) as a factor that threatened the peace efforts of the Dagbon people before the amicable resolution in 2018/2019 which finally resulted in the installation of the *YaNaa* Mahama as the overlord of Dagbon.

This research was premised on the view that culture when made context-specific, based on the customs, traditions and cultural practices of the conflicting parties can lead to the transformation of the violent Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. This next section focuses on culture, and some specific cultural practices and conflict transformation. Some day-to-day cultural practices such as libation pouring, intermarriages, language, and artworks such as sculptures and paintings were selected to be used for transformation for this study.

Language and conflict transformation

Language is the medium through which culture, both tangible and intangible, is transferred from one generation to the next. It serves as the mode

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of communication between and among people and through which information is shared. Though language has been the medium through which conflicts are transformed or ceased, it has also contributed to the escalation of non-violent conflicts into violent and destructive conflicts. The choice of words and the demeanour or posture assumed can inflame passions through the use of unsavoury words and inflammatory speeches that incite one side against the other(s). An example is the case in Rwanda before the genocide where the Tutsi were metaphorically referred to as 'cockroaches' by the Hutu as a way to dehumanise them (Iloh et al., 2021). Also, speaking the same language has been established as one factor that has helped the facilitation of transformation while differences have been said to delay the process of dialogue. The languages of the conflicting groups, in cases of inter-group conflicts as is the case between the Alavanyo and Nkonya are also equally important in the dialoguing processes leading to transformation.

In processes considered to augment the conflictual attitudes and behaviours between two groups with different dialects as is the case of Alavanyo and Nkonya, the language to adopt is very much needed to be agreed on by all the parties involved in the transformation. Between both groups, the Alavanyo speak Ewe and the Nkonya speak Nkonya and Twi or Akan. But the parties have indicated that almost every Nkonya can speak Ewe while more than half of Alavanyo can speak Nkonya. In this study, the researcher asked the key informants and participants how language can support the transformation of the conflict. Asked if language can contribute to the transformation, a key informant narrated the following:

> The Nkonya do not trust any Ewe-speaking language group, its not
> only the Alavanyo. Likewise, the Alavanyo do not trust any Guan

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group. The reason I said I don't know the local language that we can use is in this case But I believe that if the two factions will give the Peace Council the opportunity, the issue can be dealt with. But because the Peace Council has some Ewes, they also experience some mistrust from the Nkonya because in some cases, when we meet them, despite their understanding and speaking Ewe very well, when we want to speak Ewe with them, they do not agree. It's either we speak English or Akan with them (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

In this quotation, this key informant indicated the potential for language to transform the destructive Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted conflict into a constructive one. However, the informant is unsure of which of the languages that can be used for the transformation. He mentions the problem of mistrust between and among the parties making it difficult to engage them in effective dialogue to transform the stale relationship. This makes the Nkonya an unwilling partner as the local language that is used mostly is Ewe, which most of them can speak very well but were unwilling to speak it and instead, prefer the Nkonya, Akan or English.

The Nkonya are surrounded by Ewe speaking people on all sides and so about 90 percent are very fluent in speaking Ewe while about 60 percent of the Alavanyo can also speak Nkonya as well. The refusal to speak the language of the other, then require further interpretation to be done to the understanding of the parties and the interveners. During the fieldwork for this research, they spoke very fluent Ewe with the research team during the interviews. Considering this background, both languages can be used but I would recommend the use of the Ewe language considering the statistics that spoke

one of the local languages or in the absence of which makes the English language the preferred choice which also require translations to be done.

This finding makes the use of indigenous language for dialogue which according to Iloh et al. (2021) and Asmamaw (2014) is required for successful transformation to be achieved. This requires translation which can slow the process and obstruct understanding. Interestingly, the FGDs support the view of culture or traditions being used as enablers for conflict transformation. In FGDs in Nkonya and Alavanyo, the participants iterated the positive effect culture can have for the transforming the conflict between the Alavanyo and Nkonya. They were, however, not sure how this can be achieved since the two groups have some cultural differences but they emphasised the importance of understanding between the parties for an effective transformation of the conflict.

In another FGD conducted with the Centre for National Culture in Ho, the participants unanimously held the opinion that culture was key to finding solutions to the myriads of conflicts that have dotted Ghana. They mentioned language as a key component as they indicated the huge contributions that performances that are done in local languages do make to changing attitudes and conflict situations globally. Their challenge was that they are not involved in such activities and even when they do involve them, it is just to engage in cultural performances. They think they should be involved in processes that will require their working with the groups to even come up with some context-specific performances using the local languages to increase identification, recognition and ownership that marks special occasions and can be performed to revitalise the need for peace annually.

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From the responses of key informants and the excerpts of the FGDs, language presents avenues for the transformation of protracted conflicts. To the respondent, the parties must understand each other. Thus, there must be understanding and by extension, trust between the parties to enhance the chances for the transformation process to be efficient. The role of endogenous knowledge such as language in ending violence and restoring peace cannot be overemphasised here. Indigenous knowledge is key here (Absolon, 2010; Adjei & Adebayo, 2014; Tsega, 2004). At this point, the researcher was interested in the propensity of music and dance to aid with the transformation of violent conflicts.

Music, dance and conflict transformation

"Music is the language of feeling and passion, as words are the language of reason". This quotation by Arthur Schopenhauer in 1818 suggests that music is capable of rousing very deep emotions in people and has a healing effect it introduces into the human person depending on the words, context and audience. According to Youngerman (1975), music affects conflict transformation. Asked about the potential of music and dance to transform conflicts, the key informants answered in affirmation of the important role of music in the transformation of violent destructive conflicts into constructive ones. A key respondent narrated the following:

> Yes, people who compose music can use that to incite war. I think that is something that can be used during festivals. I once visited a festival in Alavanyo where a lot of Nkonya people attended that particular festival. Some of the folksongs that encouraged living together were sung. Folklores were told of the histories of the groups; their travels and how they arrived at their present home. Some words of the song, "While we were travelling a long way to

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come to you, you were also travelling a long way to come to me".
They sang this and I actually felt this was something that could
bring the two parties together. So yes, traditional or folk music can
lead to transformation. We need to encourage our artists to look into
that area and write folk songs that can encourage peace. This will
help the people to see the effects of war, see the benefits of peace as
well and choose which one they want (Interview with an official of
a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

From the quotation above, the key informant believes that the Alavanyo-
Nkonya conflict experienced some transformation through music. The response
points to the potential that music can transform violence due to its soothing and
healing properties. In very violent conflict situations, it has been used to bring
the parties to sober reflection on their lives before the conflict. According to
former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, music crosses boundaries and elicits
sober feelings that move people from violence to peace. The key informant
expressed this after listening to folk music at the festival he attended.

Through music, people can be and moved into considering peace and
working towards peace. In the same vein, it can be used to stir up negative
sentiments towards a particular group of people and the mayhem that could
result in violence and even war (Kagan & Kirchberg, 2016). According to
Kagan and Kirchberg, although music can be used for inciting hatred and
leading groups of people into violent conflicts as was seen in Rwanda, it can be
used for the transformation of negative, violent and destructive conflicts and
work towards peace (Urbain, 2015; 2008).

As noted in Chapter Two the section on music, dance and conflict
transformation, music is used at different fora to appeal to the senses of people
and unite them during and after conflict. Music can be used at dialogue meetings

and durbars and the type of traditional songs and music that appeals to the soul and spirit of the people. These are used to invoke the presence of their gods and ancestors to witness and guide them through the phase and help restore peace (Urbain, 2008). Special music can also be composed to guide the process and used during occasions such as annual commemorations to serve as reminders of the need for peace and eschew violence in future.

Ramsbotham et al., (2017) note that music has also been noted to have therapeutic or healing properties which makes it a good aspect of culture or cultural practice for conflict transformation, resolution or peacebuilding. In South Africa after apartheid, Chechnya and Kosovo after the protracted violent conflicts, music has been used as therapy for battered people and societies after protracted violence and helped transform strained relationships (Jordenger, 2008). This is normally so when the parties are made to work together on music that speaks to them and forms the basis for their societies' survival.

In the Alavanyo-Nkonya area, both groups enjoy the *Borborbor* music and dance, though it is traditionally an Alavanyo culture, provide an avenue for the groups to explore their traditional music and dance in their performances and celebrations to help foster unity. The former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, stated that music knows no barriers and cultural backgrounds considering the sustainable benefits of music in transforming conflicts and ensuring peace. Thus, music can unite all manner of people and make the world a harmonious place (Annan, cited in Kent, 2008).

Art and conflict transformation

Though the arts have the potential of introducing societal transformation toward sustainability after violent escalations between segments of society, it

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has not received much attention over the years. Turning to the experience of art on the individual level, cultures of sustainability can be fostered through artistic aesthetics of complexity that open up feelings of transformation towards sustainability. In this study, the focus was on sculptures as a form of artistic expression practised in the area. A key respondent narrated the following in support of art, sculptures and conflict transformation:

> Yes, sculptures, paintings, and all these things, if identified and used, can bring about peace between the conflicting parties. But they have been underused. Maybe the right word is disregarded, maybe they have not been used. But in terms of using art and conflict transformation, we have not and that is an area that whoever wants to engage in peacemaking needs to look at. We need to encourage our artists to also look into that area in terms of writing songs and what peace can bring. So that people will see the effect of war, see the benefit of peace as well and choose which one they want to choose (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

From the quotation, the respondent emphasises the importance of art and sculptures of the conflicting parties in conflict transformation processes. These have been asserted by Absolon (2010) as indigenous cultural pathways that cause healing to social upsets. These modes communicate to the people. When artistic experiences and practice are shared on the collective levels, it enhances group cohesion, and musical improvisation trains social creativity, both of which are important resources for the resilience of societies (Kagan & Kirchberg, 2016; Schippers & Grant, 2016). The sculptures can be used to promote peace.

The Alavanyo-Nkonya area abounds with several artworks including metallurgy, and basket weaving among others which can be explored for such

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peace outcomes where members of both groups are brought together and trained. The sides can engage in learning and or teaching these crafts and these crafts can be adopted for economic benefits. Those that support peace and communicate deterrence need to be used. These resources from the culture and the environment of the combatants form the basis for the transition from violence to peace.

Intermarriages and conflict transformation

It has been asserted that inter-group marriages can contribute to the restoration of peace between antagonistic parties. Van den Berghe (1969) indicated that in conflict situations, intergroup interactions, including marriages can be suspended. The research demanded to know if intermarriages between the Alavanyo-Nkonya can contribute to the transformation of the protracted conflict between them. A resident narrated the following in an interview:

> Because if I get married to a Nkonya lady, that one too can contribute to transformation. I cannot plan evil against her or her people. Because, our men, who got married to women from Nkonya, bring the women to the Alavanyo side, and the women stay with them. I don't think they can plan evil against each other. And Nkonya men who got married to Alavanyo people cannot also plan any evil against them because they know that our people are staying with them over there and their people are also staying with us (Interview with a resident, male, 5th May 2022, Alavanyo).

This quotation by this Alavanyo resident supports the position that intermarriages can contribute to an amicable transformation of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. From the narration, people will hardly plan to hurt their kin and so the parties will eschew the negative execution of violence against their brothers and sisters. One can conclude that intermarriages, therefore, have the

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potential to lead to an effective transformation of the protracted conflict. An Alavanyo resident also narrated the following in an interview:

> In the olden days, our relationship or unity was good. This means that we Alavanyo people married from Nkonya and Nkonya people also married from Alavanyo and we have given birth amongst ourselves so there was a good bond between us like siblings (Interview with an Assemblyperson, male, 5th May 2022, Alavanyo).

Another key informant, a resident of Nkonya, also narrated the following about his ancestry and parentage which confirmed the blend of both ethnicities.

> My father is in Alavanyo. My brother who died about two years ago was born in Alavanyo. The Alavanyo won't understand that now we are family. They won't understand. In this world when you are doing something bad and you are asked to stop, you must stop (Interview with a resident, female, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

From this interview narration, the informant suggests that their ancestry is merged between the two ethnicities. There are indications that the groups still intermingled and intermarried at the inter-personal levels. To the informant, the brotherliness that existed between them is therefore something that needs to make the Alavanyo to stop doing things that are stoking the conflict and work towards a peaceful end to the conflict. A study that was conducted in the Asuogyaman District of Ghana found that the Akwamu and Tongu ethnic groups prevented intermarriages during and after the violent clashes in 1989 (see Ametefe et al., 2021). Nevertheless, they encouraged this to lead to a blend of the groups and blur out the differences between them.

In the Alavanyo-Nkonya communities, the FGDs established that there were not much differences between the customs associated with marriage resulting from the several years of bonding. These can be encouraged to result

in children from both backgrounds which can result in unity as the groups merge into one with less differences and where each member has family on the other side. Intermarriages can help bridge the differences (Giddens, 2009).

Festivals and conflict transformation

In an interview with a resident, he noted that festivals have the propensity to lead to the transformation of the protracted conflict between the two ethnicities. He narrated:

> Like the SASADU celebrated by the Alavanyo, can solve the conflict. We can invite them, that we have our festival so we send a letter to them. They will also come if only they want the conflict to end so we live as one. If they are also having their own and they invite us, we will also go and we will celebrate with them. We have *borborbor* dance, so we will go with our drums to entertain them. So, they also enjoy what we do so that anytime we invite them to our festival, they will surely come. Through that cooperation and communal celebration, we can change the violence and achieve a successful transformation of the conflict (Interview with a resident, male, 5th May 2022, Alavanyo).

The response by this resident also points to the uniting role of festival celebrations. Though the groups celebrate different festivals, they have participated in and celebrated each other's festivals in the past. This annual engagement brings people from far and near, citizens and non-citizens, Alavanyo and Nkonya to celebrate the historical incidents that culminated in the institutionalisation of the celebration. Most festivals are a result of some historical fate that the groups surmounted which include famine and pestilence among others. Such celebrations are instituted to mark various positive historical experiences that are then rooted in the culture and traditions of the people. Certain values are also reposed in the celebrations. The interveners can

institute a festival as part of the transformation process to be celebrated and to reinforce the peace that is worked and also to serve as a deterrent for those who foment trouble. This revitalises the culture and traditions (Absolon, 2010; Kagan, 2011).

Libation pouring, invocation, curses and conflict transformation

Further, the research sought to establish if pouring of libation to the gods and the ancestors amidst oath-taking can also lead to the transformation of the conflict. The presence of the gods and ancestors is invoked in the process of pouring the libation. They are asked to come and witness and support the peace process and approve the pact that is being agreed on by the parties. Pouring Libation bonds the people that are living with generations that lived before them. A resident in an interview is quoted below:

> Like maybe they will pray with alcohol, and they will give you something to hold and swear or take an oath with. "If the people of Alavanyo are the first people that will cause the fight again, something bad should happen to us or if the fighting begins, we should be punished or cursed". We did something like that, but the Nkonya attacked and killed a man called Agbeko from Alavanyo. That started the conflict again. If I poured libation and swore that if I attacked someone, something would happen to me and I have the negative consequences of this in mind, I will not engage in anything that will harm me. That is why I said it can help (Interview with a resident, male, 5th May 2022, Alavanyo).

Considering the response by this resident, it is clear that this cultural practice is meant to serve as a deterrent for those who may want to engage in future mayhem that can destabilise the peace agreement that has been reached between the parties. Their ancestors and the gods are invited to be witnesses to the process and also punish anyone who plans to engage in actions that will

threaten the peace in the future. Libation pouring is part of the traditional African society's customs and it is common to both groups. This is in reverence to the deities and also worship to their ancestors. They believe in their ancestors and need to protect the ways they handed down to the generations. This has also been in the middle of the protracted conflict as the parties strive to maintain the inheritance such as land. But the use of the libation amidst the invocation of curses is key and was also able to maintain peace between the Alavanyo and Nkonya from 1983 to 2001 (Anumel et al., 2021; Agyei et al, 2023).

Emerging from the FGDs regarding pouring libation, the parties believe highly well on how libation pouring and invoking the presence of the gods and ancestors can facilitate an effective transformation of the conflict. In the Akwa Ibom state in Nigeria, oath-taking and swearing by parties to different conflicts have led to the transformation of conflicts (Adejumobi, 2004). In Ethiopia, Asmamaw (2014) points to these being used to reduce the incidence of violence that has threatened the peace between settlers and indigenes. Although these were used with deterrence behind the mechanism, it was not adhered to and the conflict relapsed with another episode.

With most of the interviews establishing the fact that culture is key to conflict transformation, in the next section, the transformation will be addressed from the perspective stipulated by Väyrynen (1991) as he stated that to ensure an effective transformation, there must be an actor, issue, rule and structural transformations.

Transformation of the Alavanyo-Nkonya Conflict

Conflict transformation as earlier intimated, is the deliberate activities that are deployed to restructure the violent relationship that has developed as a result

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of a violent and protracted social conflict (LeBaron & Lederach, 2003; Lederach, 2014; Miall, 2004). It is also important to ascertain the levels of change that have taken place since the conflict started. In this work, conflict transformation is key and provides ways to consider protracted conflicts using the cultures of the parties. In conflict transformation, four key areas require change for a holistic transformation of a conflict (Väyrynen, 1991). These are actor transformation, issue transformation, rule transformation and structural transformation.

The research turns attention to how these were affected by the protracted conflict and how these negative changes can be transformed in the century-old protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict since it is believed that over time changes have occurred to the original actors, issues, rules and structures have changed over time. These changes call for the transformation of the conflict by transforming these four aspects that would have experienced changes over the period (Burgess & Burgess, 1996).

Issue transformation and the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict

Several issues have emerged in the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict over the years which, just as the actors have also changed considerably as noted by Azar (1987; 1990), Lederach (2003; 2014), Tonah and Anamzoya (2016) and Tsikata and Seini (2004). Issues that emerged from the interviews indicate first, the relationship between the parties has changed from cordial to violent and currently changed to a latent one as suspicions continue by the parties of the other. Regarding changes that have taken place regarding the issues involved in the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict, several have taken place. The changes have resulted in changes in the triggers over time which has however, not changed

issues regarding the interests of the primary parties to the conflict. Concerning the issues involved that needed transformation, a key respondent narrated:

> So, during the harmattan season water shortages and who is to fetch before who, and who is the overlord and who is the settler resulted in an argument and violence in 1983. The other side also retaliates. So, in simple terms what looks like a land issue is not so much a land issue, it's a retaliatory issue where they retaliated…you do me I do you based on background differences. So, for us even though land has been the trigger, the major issue now is retaliation or revenge issue between the two of them… Yeah, identity issue now but they place the land issue at the helm (Interview with a REGSEC Member, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

From the response, the conflict experienced changing issues over the century. The conflict started in 1987 with a land boundary issue but was managed with the chiefs and people coming together to have an understanding till in 1913 when a land encroachment issue could not be resolved amicably. The clashes resulted in deaths, injury to persons and destruction of properties. It was dealt with on the surface where the parties again had a misunderstanding regarding the boundary demarcation. Then later on in 1983, water shortage also led to clashes between two individuals at a creek which was the only source of water in the area during the famine season in that year. Since then, it has been attacks and retaliatory attacks by the ethnic groups based on ethnic identity although both groups still attribute the conflict to the boundary demarcation as the cause of the protracted ethnic cum resource conflict. Azar (1978; 1990) made the point that the issues inherent in protracted social conflicts change with some issues being dropped and new ones being added in his PSC theory.

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As noted by Lederach (1995; 2003), protracted conflicts have changing dynamics that result in employing mechanisms that need to reach deep into the root causes of the conflict. The conflict in Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict has experienced changing triggers and this required a theory or approach which is embedded in their ways of life to deal with. These ways have been made sustainable over the years and have stood the test of time and provide acceptable ways of transformation, a peaceful and lasting transformation of the impasse (Burgess & Burgess, 1996) and thus, making conflict transformation the right approach.

One thing that stood out in the interviews and the FGDs was the readiness of both groups to work towards peace. Both groups are fatigued and want a solution to the violence. They are ready for the transformation of the conflict from its violent nature to its peaceful form. They need assistance to make the conflict non-destructive and that presents the opportune time for conflict transformation (Galtung & Fisher, 2013). This conducive point in time for the peacebuilding activities or the broader spectrum of conflict transformation activities, of which peacebuilding is part, according to Zartman (1999) and Coleman et al. (2008) is known as ripeness. This can be seen in the statement of a key informant below:

> This issue has become heartache for us, the Alavanyo, especially the people of Kpeme. Since we, the people of Kpeme, are the closest to them [Tayi], they hurt us more and this has been a big issue for us. So, please if you can help us to establish peace between us and the Nkonya, that will be good. Initially, we used to trade amongst ourselves, but we do not anymore since the conflict started. We do not go to each other's towns. If I go there, they will kill me before nightfall but if they come here, we do not do anything to them. That

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is how the conflict between us has limited the interaction between us (Interview with a chief, male, 29ᵗʰ April 2022, Alavanyo).

The response of this chief demonstrates a lack of trust for the opponents that he may not survive a visit to the other community. In an interview with a key informant conducted in Nkonya, it also stood out clear that the Nkonya were also ready to welcome peace into their communities and also between them and their neighbours. The key informant stated as follows:

> Yes, I believe so, you know the tradition and culture is practised by traditionalists and chiefs and the lands are controlled by the chiefs. So, if the chiefs are ready. I was told recently that they [Nkonya people] were planning to attack us [Alavanyo] but their paramount chief was not in agreement so they did not attack us. So, if all the chiefs from both sides are not in agreement for their subjects to fight, then the youth will not fight. Thus, if the chiefs warn his people against fighting but they defy him, he can name those who disobeyed him to be arrested. But if the chiefs say no to conflict in the public domain but behind the scenes, they encourage the conflict, the conflict will not end (Interview with a youth resident, female, 5ᵗʰ May 2022, Alavanyo).

The quotation above confirms that the Alavanyo and Nkonya themselves are now at the point where they want the conflict to end. However, as noted by Azar (1990), when the solutions meet the aims of one party while neglecting the needs of the other, the mechanisms fail. The mechanisms failed to address the root identity and group needs of the two ethnicities and these needs are embedded in the culture and traditions of the people from the divide. The quest by the groups to meet these competing needs is one major reason for the unending and violent nature of the conflict and stagnating trade relations. The respondent notes the past peaceful trading relationship that encouraged

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economic activities between them due to the violent outbursts as has been noted by the conflict transformation approach (Miall, 2004).

Further, key informants were asked about current issues involved in the conflict. A key informant said:

> Yeah, the relationship is an issue that has existed for more than a century… The triggers have changed over the period from land to identity and now to economic issues such as timber and the cultivation of Indian hemp and even politics have also triggered the conflict (Interview with a REGSEC Member, male, 27th April 2022, Ho).

From the narration above, the issues such as triggers in the conflict kept changing and new ones kept being added as the conflict progressed but the issue which has to do with resources and needs such as land, identity and recognition remained the same. As noted by Tonah and Anamzoya (2016), most conflicts in Ghana and most of Africa are a result of a plethora of issues, remote and immediate. Some conflicts which may result from a single issue finally have other issues coming up and driving the conflict for a long period. As can be inferred from the response of the key informant, the immediate cause was a water shortage and then the issue of inadequate land to handle the needs of both parties, differences of identity and backgrounds, and finally the issue of retaliation or counterattacks. The response also indicates that the histories of mistrust and constant suspicion between both groups are still at the centre of the conflict. That leads to the attacks and counter-attacks of members of both groups or communities and prolongs the conflict and makes it intractable (Anumel et al., 2021). A key informant narrates as follows:

> Yeah, we cannot run away from the base issue, which is land. However, as of today, if we are to research as you are on what is

causing the conflict, I think it may not be land again. People may not even know. I believe strongly for the moment; that it is an economic issue. Issues relating to employment, issues relating to the identity or the structural problems, issues of trust and minority; you are this and that. Those things I think are all related to the crisis. So, for now, I think the issue has moved from land to economic issues including identity matters (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 16th May 2022, Accra).

Another issue that is emerging from the conflict in the current state is the issue of equity between both parties. The parties should consider each other as partners in development and resolve the age-old impasse as they continue to live in the same space. The key informants believe there are no clear winners in such conflicts as a military win of one party does not assure a win as the other party will always come back (Connor, 1994), as he lays out the primordialist theory as the ethnic groups owe their members the responsibility to protect them and also ensure the survival of their respective groups (Geertz, 1973).

Actor transformation and the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict

Every conflict has a minimum of two actors and these can be endless. These actors include primary actors who can be openly seen, the secondary and tertiary actors who are mostly hidden. From the responses, the actors in the conflict between the Alavanyo and Nkonya are primarily the citizens and residents of Alavanyo-Nkonya ethnic groups who reside in these communities such as chiefs, assembly members, and local leaders. These are actors who are directly impacted by the conflict.

Other actors are invisible and act behind the scenes who may be affected by the conflict and others who instead benefit immensely from the chaos in the area such as farmers engaged in Indian hemp cultivation, local weapon

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manufacturers in both communities, timber merchants, political figures who hail from the area. Others include political parties, church leaders, neighbouring communities such as people of Kpando and Hohoe, the government of Ghana, national, regional and even some international entities such as citizens who reside outside the country, and foreign institutions and development partners such as international CSOs and NGOs.

The primary actors, who happen to be the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups, have remained the same over the years but the individuals in the groups have changed tremendously especially the primary actors regarding the initial actors over the 100 years. Most of them have died. So, the current combatants are offsprings of the initial group. The people in government are also different. The combatants at different points were either involved in the processes and at other times, just their leadership were involved. The conflict will be examined along the personal, relational, structural and cultural levels of the transformation agenda in the next section of the chapter. This is to assess the change that has taken place over the years.

Structural transformation and the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict

From the conflict transformation perspective, the structures (political, social, economic) of the society involved in the conflict are also affected by protracted conflicts (Lederach, 1995; 2014). Due to this, the structures also need to transform to enable them to conform to new norms to make peace and justice sustainable in the recovering society. The research also focused on structures during and after conflict to assess the planning and decision-making functions of these institutions (Miall, 2004). A respondent narrated that the land

should be used for the establishment of a factory for the production of recycled products from waste.

> For example, about 4 days ago, when the MUSEC security group led by the Municipal Chief Executive of Hohoe came to meet the paramount chief here, the MCE made a request that he wanted a piece of land to construct a plant to recycle waste. The paramount chief went and showed him a land between Nkonya and Alavanyo So, after the meeting the Chief told the MCE that after completing the project, they should employ the youth from both Nkonya and Alavanyo which could bring unity among the two communities (Interview with a MUSEC member, male, 10th May 2022, Hohoe).

Regarding this response, the respondent has called the government representative, thus the MCE, to offer employment to the youth after the government complete setting up a waste recycling factory on the disputed land. This will offer new economic opportunities to the youth and people in the area to engage in other economic activities for income. This will lead to changes in the economic activities culminating in changes in the economic structure where the area was predominantly farmers and where some tasks were for the groups (Väyrynen, 1991). The youth being gainfully employed will not have time to engage in violent acts. This then transforms into changes in the social structure or institutions of the communities. This will reflect changes in the social standings of the youth and this takes them away from concentrating on the piece of land as a lost livelihood and thereby engaging in violence. This adds to the transformation of the structure of the conflict (Azar, 1990; Ledeach, 2003).

The Big Picture of Conflict Transformation

Lederach (2003; 2014) stated that for conflicts to be effectively transformed, it has to be done on four levels of the affected society. These are the personal, relational, structural and cultural levels.

At the personal or individual level, the conflict destroyed the relationships between residents from the two communities or both ethnicities. The two ethnic groups have indicated that there has been less interaction between them as their way to avoid being attacked by members of the other group. As part of maintaining less interaction between members of the groups, it was not expected that members of the group to visit the other community. This created a distance between the groups and this was to be maintained even between they and their family members who are from the other community or ethnic groups. They are not to deal with people from the other community although this is not entirely so. Some people have visited and still do visit the other community to see family, attend funerals, marriage ceremonies, naming ceremonies, or even festivals at the individual level, even though, at the group level, these are not allowed.

This development was so obvious during the KIIs and when I engaged in one-on-one conversations with some of the members who participated in the FGDs. However, during the FGDs, members did exhibit their unwillingness to engage in any form of interaction with people from the other group but admitted people doing so as individuals and even mentioned their own experiences doing such an event. A key informant narrated:

> Because there is the likelihood of an attack if a Nkonya person finds an Alavanyo person on that road or vice versa. The road cannot be used and so that's the relationship now and from the history, they

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> used to be very cordial communities, they lived together… and cooperated on a myriad of levels to advance the progress of their people (Interview with a MUSEC Member, 10th May 2022, Hohoe).

From the quotation, this key informant, suggests that the relationship between individuals was non-existent at the personal level. This has even affected the security of the person and security was completely broken. However, residents painted contrasting views about interactions at individual levels. An Assembly person noted that at the personal level, members of both groups interacted.

> At the individual level, we are very okay with our neighbours, insofar as, we do not go there. As I said earlier, I may travel to Kpando, Hohoe or anywhere outside from here and meet a Nkonya guy and we can interact nicely. "Hi I am so and so... Let us be friends" and we can talk about ourselves and our families among other things. We do not need to involve our elders before we communicate among ourselves when we meet (Interview with an Assembly person, male, 5th May 2022, Alavanyo).

The quotation is clear that some individuals did not comply with the group ban on interactions between members of both groups. During the individual interviews, it became increasingly clear that members of both groups at the individual levels interacted with their families on either side not at the behest of the leadership although the leaders know their members do. However, at group levels, such as was realised during the FGDs, they openly were against the interaction with members of the outgroup. Especially during the female FGD in Nkonya, the members were so much against interacting with members of the Alavanyo side but when engaged in personal discussions, this researcher was informed of individual-level engagements between them and the Alavanyo.

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At the relational level, the relationship between the two groups has not been on good terms especially from the 1990s to 2020 when violent clashes became frequent. Interactions have not been encouraged at the group levels as indicated in interviews with the group leaders and other key informants. The FGDs also support the notion of no interaction between the groups. They do not cooperate to engage in developmental programmes of any kind. They no longer invite each other to support in times of sadness as was the situation before the violence of 1923 which remained intermittent till 2019. But as indicated above, individuals did participate in these activities when their families on the other side of the divide suffer any form of loss or there is any need to visit them at the other to celebrate or see sick family members.

As noted in the FGDs, an individual participates in such activities by the opposing side at one's own risk as the group cannot guarantee the security of any member who is found on the other side and suffers any attack, injury, or death. However, the view is not shared by all the key informants. Others hold a different view of this and assert that this will instead produce a better outcome to the impasse and lead to a transformation of the conflict. In an interview, a key informant said:

> As time goes on, things will change because their place is close to our place. So sooner than later, they will come around to buy water and food, and contacts will be exchanged, so that is how it will start. It is all about the mindset of the people, and the behavioural change (Interview with Chief, male, 27th April 2022, Alavanyo).

The key informant is emphasising activities that can lead to changes such as trade. To the informant, as interactions are encouraged between the parties, especially through economic activities, the parties will interact more and

that can be the beginning of changes in behaviour and attitudes as suggested by Galtung (1969; 1996).

At the structural level, the interviews suggested that there can be reformations to the structures that can contribute to the transformation of the conflict. Lederach (2003) suggests that long-term conflicts negatively affect the structures or institutions in society. Curle (1971) and Dudouet (2007) noted that conscious efforts must be made by the stakeholders to effect changes in the structures that caused the conflict in the first place. This is how future occurrences can be avoided. A key informant stated that there can be a transformation of the structures if the state uses institutions meant for such tasks during an interview quoted below:

> There is hope that we can achieve peace if we…can do some structural reformation. I believe that if the Peace Council can be empowered both by law and economically, the Peace Council can do a lot and achieve a lot (Interview with an official of a CSO, male 26th April 2022, Ho).

The respondent has pointed to the use of the NPC for the purposeful transformation of the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict. One can also mention WANEP, and KAIPTC for these roles since they are civil society establishments or government institutions that have been involved in the peacemaking process. Lederach (1995; 2003) stated in the peacebuilding and conflict transformation approaches the need to engage entities that are not state-owned and other neutral third parties to facilitate peacemaking attempts by depending on the local or indigenous resources.

Concerning the structural level, the protracted conflict has had an immense impact on the structures and institutions in the Alavanyo and Nkonya

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societies. Institutions such as family, church and chieftaincy have broken down as they are unable to stick together and provide the needed support to their members, especially in the situation where those members of these families, churches or communities spread across both communities. Where members of the family hail from both communities, the study showed that the families suffered disunity as both communities warned members from interacting with people from the other side and vice versa. As a result, marriages broke down as partners moved back to their people to prevent attacks from the opposite side and in some ways, those married women from the other community were considered to be sympathisers of the enemy and were ostracised.

Currently, the status quo remains in force in principle even though certain individuals or families have ignored the idea and still contract marriages with partners from the other community or ethnic groups and cross to the other group to attend family programmes such as funerals and festivals among other things. The church also suffered major setbacks as it became complicit in conflict as either side suspected the church of supporting the other side against them. Church activities became places of targeting members of other ethnic groups. Roads connecting both communities cannot be used any longer due to the conflict as anyone seen on the road can be attacked, injured, or killed.

Considering the response of the key informant, it is evident that some structures need to be transformed to avert the new episodes of the conflict and completely do away with the conflict entirely. Absolon (2010) mentions the religious institutions as well as structures that could be relied on for peace. They can do these by engaging the parties, families, educational institutions etc for the establishment of peace. In Rwanda, however, the religious institutions lost

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credibility as some of them were said to have supported the combatants and were not trusted by all the parties. But elsewhere in Ethiopia, Asmamaw also indicated the use of religion as the parties were subjected to rituals and after that were made to take oaths to abide by and this reformed the structural issues embedded in the conflict. The settlers and indigenes worked towards a lasting peace.

At the cultural level, where Lederach (2003) indicates changes to the identity, values and customs of the groups, as a result of the protracted conflict, there was the need for a conscious effort to remedy the situation. A CSO official narrated the following:

> Our traditional councils in the past were not properly documented. We need to. So, if that can also be looked at, where we will have proper documentation of whatever affects our traditional council and it's a laid down principle regarding culture, cultural practices and how to transform conflict and build peace, that can also be helpful. Because most of the things people say, it is out of their memory and memories cannot be consistent sometimes. It will be very helpful because society is dynamic and things are changing (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

The informant made it clear that the chieftaincy institution and the traditional councils need restructuring to position them to produce better results regarding conflicts between parties. There was the need to properly document past events, and cultural practices that threaten the peace and security of society which will serve as precedence for future misunderstandings as society progresses towards documents and facts and no longer on oral presentation from memory. This finding is close to observations made by Aikins (2012) and Tonah (2005) in their studies of the chieftaincy institutions in Northern Ghana and the

conflicts that have inundated the area and continue to threaten the peace and security of the people.

At the cultural level, identity formation and ethnic backgrounds became a threat to the individual. Attacks and counterattacks in the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict have been based on the ethnicity of the individual when found in areas considered to belong to the opposing side in the conflict. The values and customs of the groups have been relegated and side-lined. Festival celebrations and other forms of celebration are not held due to suspicion that the opponent can infiltrate and attack people and ruin the celebration as was experienced during some of the festival celebrations.

Other Cultural Practices and Suggestions for the Transformation of the Alavanyo and Nkonya Conflict

During the interviews, key informants suggested various modes that could be adopted to achieve a successful transformation to restore sustainable peace in the communities and between the two groups. Likewise, in the FGDs also the participants mentioned other local or cultural practices that could be used in the mechanisms for the successful transformation of the protracted Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict. These included local or indigenous games or sports. The key informant narrated:

> One message I carried to them was depicted in a childhood game we used to play when we were parting ways. It is popularly known as *Asi kakɛnyɛ tsi ŋu wo*. A colleague touches you and runs off. But because you don't want anybody's handprint to remain on you, you also run and touch somebody else. But at the end of the day, one person goes home with somebody's handprint which they couldn't transfer to another. So, I told them that if they want to retaliate all the time, the war will never end. So, one side must decide that it

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should end with them, the hostility must end with them. So, the sides took up the message and they held their peace. but it does not mean that there is peace now. But the main issue is still pending (Interview with an official of a CSO, male, 26th April 2022, Ho).

From the response of the key informant, he used the game to call for the establishment of peace between the parties. The game *Asi kakɛnyɛ tsi ŋu wo* translates to "My handprint is left on you", and is normally played by school kids or playmates who are dispersing for home until they meet again. In this game, the kids start by one of the kids touching another and leaving a print on him/her. The onus is on that person to find another mate to leave a print on. It continues like that until there is a final person who is unable to leave a print on another who finally takes the print home. Here, he/she leaves for home on the basis, there is no one to print on and is content with that. When they meet next time, the game starts with another person and not necessarily with that person who was last this time. The game teaches that one cannot always win and inculcates the virtue of forgiving for peace to reign does not emphasise revenge. At a point, there is a need to let the pain or loss go and they move on as a group or a society. This analogy holds a good prospect for the transformation of the localised Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted conflict. We learn that revenge is not the way to peace.

Another key informant also mentioned another cultural or local co-operative mode used in farming in the following narration:

There are customs we can perform but how can we do this together? Our communities are close, so, if the two groups understand each other, we can use the 'Nnoboa' practice. Because once we all farm together and help each other to harvest and then eat together there will be peace. Now, the question is who will propose and who will

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understand? So, that is one practice I can mention for you. And you know the 'Nnoboa' is purely a designed practice in this part of Ghana (Interview with a resident, male, 7th May 2022, Nkonya).

The resident also mentioned a cultural practice of community in the farming or agricultural sector. *Nnoboa* system of farming is where some farmers come together to clear and cultivate crops for a colleague farmer and at another time, you go to another farmer's land to repeat the same activities. They continue till all members of the group have the same service performed in their farm. He indicates that since the Alavanyo and Nkonya are mostly farmers, the same can be done where groups are formed from both communities and this can lead to restructuring the relationships and work towards the transformation of the stale relationship between them.

Another suggestion made in the narration was that the government taking over the piece of disputed land was not a good way to transform the conflict but rather putting it to good use of the members of both communities especially in the production of products that can serve as memory of the history of the conflict. However, most residents in both communities believed that when the government takes over and puts the land to developmental use such as in constructing a factory for the production of goods and services which is made to employ citizens of both communities, it will augur well for them. A resident narrated that:

> Ok, it is not only the siting of the company that is the solution. They are trying to give us a police station on the way when coming from Nkonya. When the company is sited there, people can pass through that lane so stationing the police there will secure the place and also promote peace. So, if we have this police station there, it can help (Interview with a resident, male, 5th May 2022, Alavanyo).

The quotation above mentioned the establishment of the company as a means of employment for the people of the two communities. But added the need to establish a police station close by to protect the installation and maintain law order in the area. A respondent also confirmed the government's plan to establish a military training school on the piece of land in dispute with the resident. Here, the needs of the people as suggested by Azar (1990) will be met, thus employment for livelihood, sustenance and security provision for the safety of the residents and the company. Another corroborates the need for the establishment of the company in the quote below.

> Some time ago, there was a suggestion that some people and I were tasked to write a proposal regarding the setting up of a military camp here on the disputed piece of land, which will involve the youth from both sides (Nkonya and Alavanyo). This was targeted to result in their employment as security officers with the security agencies. This was intended to promote unity among the two factions while maintaining peace and stability in the area (Interview with Assembly person, male, 12th May 2022, Alavanyo).

The quotation points to the establishment of a military camp by the government on the disputed land. This is believed to offer opportunities to the youth of the area to enlist to become officers or get employment into other roles which will make them economically viable individuals in society. The military camp will also serve as a buffer between the two parties and also maintain the peace and security of the place.

These activities are geared towards the transformation of the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict and promote the restoration of durable peace. Justice will also be enhanced as the parties strive towards fairness since conflict transformation considers justice in accessing and distributing resources to

people and assures a high propensity for peace to be achieved. Thus, there must be a change in the status quo that resulted from the conflict. The changes must be at the personal or individual, group relationships and institutional and structural levels of society to ensure comprehensive transformation in conflictual societies

There is therefore the need to make these indigenous mechanisms sustainable and transferred to the generations, making them imperative for solving social ills including conflicts. The similarities between the groups in terms of culture far outweigh the differences. Their cultures and practices present transformational opportunities that can be explored for the restoration of peace between the parties. Both parties can then co-exist in peace geared towards the development of both ethnicities and their communities when the activities of the spoilers are taken care of by the state, traditional leaders and the conflicting parties, CSOs and NGOs, and international parties who welcome the use of indigenous ways.

The responses and issues from the FGDs suggest a loss of trust in the existing mechanisms especially the Western mechanisms that have been used for the purposes of resolution. Most of the key informants have indicated the need for review of the mechanisms since the ones that have already been deployed have failed to yield the needed resolution. The study established that the mechanisms were not fully deployed, government is not committed to the process as there is lack of enforcement of the re-demarcation or taking over of the piece of land for other purposes, the neutral third parties or interveners are not aware of the culture and practices of the people among several other reason. Resolution has failed as the interest to address symptoms and immediate causes

has prevented the parties and neutral third parties, including government, from reaching deep into the conflicts to transform the root issues fuelling the conflict (Adebayo et al., 2014; Bukari, 2013; Issifu & Bukari, 2022; Kanu, 2019).

There is therefore the need for transformation which makes room for the consideration of the cultures of the Alavanyo and the Nkonya. The responses indicate the need to work on restructuring the relationship by drawing their attention to respect and understanding that they are equal partners in the process. The interest to address symptoms and immediate causes prevents the parties and neutral third parties from reaching deep into the conflicts.

With the introduction of the cultures and the associated cultural practices, the informants and participants believe that there will be an efficient transformation of the conflictual relationship that exists between the Alavanyo-Nkonya ethnic groups. According to the informants, these cultural practices must be inculcated in the mechanisms that are used for the transformation. These must also be made sustainable through an intermittent renewal at least annually as reminder and rites performed to mark the occasion through arts and performances.

Chapter Summary

The chapter also set out to examine the potential for culture to restructure the relationships between the conflicting parties. The chapter established the potency of the cultures of both parties to restructure the relationship between Alavanyo and Nkonya. Arts, language, festivals and others that were examined proved their potential to restructure the violent relationship that has been formed as a result of the conflict. The chapter also showed that indigenous culture has some resilience aspects which when harnessed can result

in the transformation of protracted social conflicts. The transformation process should encompass long-term actions and processes that lead to changes in issues, behaviours and structures that result in conflict by addressing the root causes. Thus, a transformational approach seeks to understand the particular episode of conflict, as embedded in the greater pattern of society and history, and not in isolation.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings of the study. It highlights the major findings, draws conclusions based on the findings, and makes recommendations for the sustainable transformation of the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict in the Hohoe Municipal and Biakoye Districts of the Volta and Oti Regions of Ghana respectively. The chapter ends by looking at the contribution of this study to knowledge and suggesting areas for consideration by policymakers and areas for future research.

Summary

Summarily, the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict has become protracted due to failures of the conflict resolution mechanisms which only deal with the symptoms and not the causes and underlying issues causing such conflicts. The study aimed to explore the role of culture in transforming the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. Specifically, the research aims to 1) describe the current state of the Alavanyo and Nkonya protracted social conflict; 2) Examine the various mechanisms that have been used to resolve the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict; 3) Analyse the cultural practices in the mechanisms used in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict; and 4) Assess the potential of cultural practices to restructure the relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people. Interpretivism was the paradigm that underpinned this study and the study design adopted for the study is the case study design. The sample for data collection consisted of 53 participants which includes 13 key informants, 10 residents and 30 FGD participants. Purposive and convenience sampling

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techniques were used to select all the key informants; purposive was used to select the key informants and some residents for interviewing and convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants for FGDs. Data was collected through an in-depth interview guide and a focus group discussion guide. The data was manually analysed using thematic analysis.

Summary of Key Findings

The key findings of the study are summarised based on the specific objectives of the study.

First, regarding the current state of the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict, the study found that:

i.   The Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict has become unusually protracted and thus, the application of conflict resolution approaches has not worked. There is a need for a culturally contextualised conflict transformation to augment the violent relationship between the citizens of the two groups. There is a need to concentrate on and deal with the deep-rooted issues regarding identity, power and legitimacy issues embedded in the conflict.

ii. The causes or triggers of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict has gone beyond the initial trigger of land boundary encroachment and water scarcity to become an identity conflict where the identities formed based on ancestry and first- or late-comer issues and these are used as reasons for attacking persons or groups from the other side. The conflict has experienced intrusions from conflict entrepreneurs or spoilers who engage in clandestine but lucrative businesses such as felling timber and also cultivating Indian hemp for sale. They attack

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each other in line of their work which are reported as attacks by the ethnic groups which continue to antagonise the groups against each other and thus leading to further protractedness of the conflict.

Second, regarding objective 2, the various mechanisms that have been used to resolve the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict, the study found that:

i. Western, traditional and hybrid mechanisms were used to end violence however, the Western-styled mechanisms were adopted and often used compared to the others. The Western mechanisms did not allow for the consideration of the cultures or cultural practices of both Alavanyo and Nkonya, where there was a mix, the traditional strategies were just afterthoughts and mostly used to seal the peace agreements.

ii. In situations where hybrid mechanisms were used, the mechanisms were not planned to consider the indigenous ways but just to conclude or sometimes just to begin the peace process. It is not done based on the intent of the peacemakers to consider the need for local methods which is important to indigenous methods since data supports their use and contribution to peace in the area that lasted more than the Western or liberal mechanisms which immediately culminated in a relapse.

Third, regarding objective 3 which was to analyse cultural practices in the mechanisms used in the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict, the study found that:

i. It was mostly Western-styled mediation: expert-led mediation, individual-led mediation, eminent persons-led mediation; arbitration, conciliation, negotiation, commissions of enquiry, litigation; or traditional mechanisms which included the performance of rituals,

libation pouring, amidst invocation of gods and ancestors and placement of curses, shooting into the sunset, festivals, use of local languages, payment of homage, the use of traditional and other local authorities and leaders, local games among others. Also, the implementation of the mechanisms ended abruptly due to the parties' lack of commitment to the process.

ii. Despite traditional mechanisms restored some peace that lasted longer than the attempts made using Western-styled mechanisms. There was every indication that when the people experienced or witnessed their traditions in the mechanisms, it produced a feeling of acceptance, recognition of their ancestors and deterrence, a sense of belongingness, and trust in the system. This made the agreements acceptable to all.

Lastly, objective 4 focused on assessing the potency of the cultural strategies to restructure the relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya.

i. The study suggested that cultural strategies could reorganise the conflictual relationship between the Alavanyo and Nkonya due to the violent, destructive and protracted conflict. The FGD participants and the key informants agreed that the various cultural practices could transform the conflict between the parties provided they were carefully selected in consultation with the parties and efficiently and effectively implemented.

ii. Though it was agreed that adopting and using a common local language would result in the transformation of the hostile relationship. However, the Alavanyo and Nkonya, in this case, spoke different languages, which can also produce stalemates and lead to conflict transformation.

At the personal, relational, structural and cultural levels, the protracted conflict affected individuals in attacks on individuals, the relations between the Alavanyo and Nkonya is strained and full of antagonisms, mistrust and suspicions, the structures and institutions used to deal with the seem tainted and not trusted by the people, and the cultural identities have become the triggers of the conflict. Their cultures and practices such as pouring libation amid the invocation of the gods and curses, belief in the ancestors to judge wrongdoing, celebration of festivals, intermarriages, the use of local languages and art especially sculpture can restructure the Alavanyo-Nkonya relationship. is the tool for restructuring the conflictual relationship.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, five conclusions were drawn.

The study explored culture and conflict transformation in the protracted Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict using the lens of the chiefs and people of the area with the perspective of some experts. The study concludes that the conflict is still not over. Thus, the conflict has not been successfully transformed as it has become protracted. The Alavanyo-Nkonya area is experiencing negative peace. The conflict is currently hibernating and could escalate at any moment since the underlying identity, legitimacy and power issues have still not been dealt with. Spoilers, such as marijuana cultivators and timber merchants, have also waded into the conflict and are preventing the peaceful resolution of the conflict as they attack and counter-attack competitors and this fuels the conflicts as the parties end up thinking it is members of their ethnic groups that are attacked and killed. They also employ some youth from the communities to work for them and they

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attack and kill each other in ways that are assumed to be part of the conflict but are not. With these issues left undealt with, the conflict entered a stalemate and experienced further escalation and thus, became protracted. Though the government of Ghana has taken over the 6,300-acre piece of contested land and aims to use it for the construction of a military training school, that has not been done. The people of Alavanyo-Nkonya also think that using the land to construct a factory to employ the citizens of both communities and support their livelihoods will be beneficial to all. As of now, no decision has been implemented yet besides taking over the land. The conflict has also transformed from a land resource conflict to an identity conflict as both parties now define the conflict in identity terms.

The various mechanisms used to end the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict have been Western mechanisms that lacked the values and context that the non-Western societies, especially in African societies, have been structured on. Western approaches that were mostly used and they did not take into consideration the deep and widespread relations on which African customs and traditions are based. This did not promote win-win outcomes but produced zero-sum outcomes for the parties, especially the adversarial mechanisms such as the litigation or arbitration. Some of these mechanisms used to resolve the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict did not consider all the parties to the conflict, especially those who are veiled and others who are victims that have directly suffered from the conflict or lost family, livelihood or property who are continuously looking for opportunities to cause mayhem. Also, the Western-centred mechanisms did not address the root structural issues that were underlying the conflicts thus, the conflict continues to recur.

The mechanisms did not consider the cultural practices of the parties in the mechanisms adopted to resolve the conflict. The Western mechanisms, especially the court system further divided the ethnic groups and impeded the smooth end of the conflict further polarising the conflicting parties and increasing rivalry between them. Litigation has not been a good mechanism since it does not inure to the transformation of community-based conflicts such as the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict.

Lastly, cultural practices have the potency to restructure the existing stale relationship between the Alavanyo and Nkonya. The conflict transformation approach supports the use of local resources, such the local people, language and celebrations among others, for making peace and working on peace using indigenous knowledge embedded in the cultures and ways of the people. The culture of the parties used as an engine of change ensures a complete holistic change which can be worked sustainably. Conflict transformation thrives on justice and both Alavanyo and Nkonya are crying foul over past injustices. Knowledge about a group of people their transformation and other peacemaking mechanisms and their application is important as it pre-supposes a sustainable transformation of mistrust and suspicions which it aims to take care of. Therefore, bringing the indigenous mechanisms and practices into the transformation is a sure way to enhance the achievement of peace sustainably.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings and conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations to enhance the sustainable culturally-informed contextual transformation of the protracted identity-based Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. The recommendations are as follows:

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Indigenous mechanisms of conflict transformation that place importance on conciliation and transformation of conflicts are needed to produce sustainable outcomes at the community level. There is increasing support for the use of the indigenous or traditional mechanisms or a combination of both Western and traditional (hybrid) mechanisms in the establishment of durable peace since the conflicting parties can identify with the mechanisms. As a result, local peace committees have been formed to enhance the advancement of the adoption and use of local cultural practices in the mechanisms for restoring durable peace between the parties

Adversaries

i.   Cases in the courts should be withdrawn or reviewed and instead subjected to the use of participatory mechanisms in addressing their issues. The court system or litigation has proven beyond doubt that it cannot be used for transforming community-based inter-group conflicts as this study has proven.

ii.   The adversaries or conflicting parties must show their willingness to engage with others in peaceful dialogues regarding mechanisms to be employed to transform destructive conflicts and prevent them from occurring in the future. Past hurts, mistrust and histories of antagonism and resentment must be left in the past since they have the propensity to obfuscate the current situation will be impaired.

Traditional Authorities

i.   The traditional leaders who act as third parties must be just and also let that guide them into formulating mechanisms using the traditional values embedded in the traditions of the people, which will result in a

win-win situation or a win-lose situation without stirring up annoyance among combatants.

ii.   Chiefs and their traditional councils should encourage their people to enhance their knowledge and capacities in conflict handling such as conflict transformation peacebuilding, and traditional mediation processes. The chiefs should not encourage their people to attack and counter-attack their opponents in secret and openly pretend to be against that. They should report those who engage in these activities and allow the law to deal with them.

Government and Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies

i.   The government of Ghana, through the District Assemblies, Regional and District Security Councils, peace practitioners and experts in the field of peace studies, and the Peace Councils should formulate a policy to give prominence and acceptance to indigenous mechanisms that have been rooted in their traditions and customs. Thus, the cultural practices of the people involved in misunderstandings must be first used to establish peace. If there is to merge with the Western-centered or European mechanisms, the policy must make room for the incorporation of aspects of both the indigenous and Western-centred judicial processes and structures. This would make it legitimate and better synchronise it to local ways. The Western should not override the Indigenous as the Western are not fully suited to local ways.

ii.   The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies and the National, Regional and District Peace Councils should also develop strategies that are purposeful towards the establishment of peace. The institutions

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should be given the backing of the state through finances and other logistics to enable them to participate meaningfully in peaceful transformation by using the traditional or a mix of mechanisms to build sustainable peace between conflicting parties aimed at sustainable outcomes of the conflict.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

i. CSOs should also promote, enhance, and expedite the indigenous or traditional conflict transformation mechanisms of communities and groups in conflict and not make these mechanisms and cultural practices an afterthought as has been found in this study. The traditional practices used should also be repeated annually or at short intervals to renew the need for peaceful co-existence. Promoting and sustaining such self-supporting indigenous systems and structures by civil societies possess pivotal roles in a sustainable transformation of protracted social conflicts and promoting the development of indigenous societies and their people.

ii. The CSOs, must work on how they can augment negative attitudes and behaviours and instil positive attitudes, knowledge, and capacities for peaceful co-existence through the use of indigenous or traditional methods such libation pouring and invocation of curses. The conscientisation process must include the rank and file of the residents of both communities. Local conflict transformation committees must be formed for constant engagement at the grassroots level.

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Contribution to Knowledge

Most academic research endeavours must fill some identified gaps or a need for the betterment of society. This study targeted and met some identified needs regarding the need to mainstream cultural practices into the transformation of conflicts, and thus, contributed to existing knowledge on such protracted identity-based resource conflicts at the local levels.

First, other studies on the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict, thereby, on most conflicts in Ghana focus on actors in the conflict, causes and effects on the society and its people and ways of resolving it and ensuring it does not relapse. In this study, I looked at the conflict from a composite and a multi-dimensional point of ethnic identity and resources point and not limited to land resources alone as most studies have done. I engaged in a holistic diagnosis of the protracted nature of conflicts in both regions, taking into consideration the origin, nature, current state, and the mechanisms that have been used and by whom in trying to manage or transform the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict in the Volta and Oti regions. The study found that some issues may create opportunities for thorough transformation or produce complications for a successful transformation depending on how they are handled.

Trustworthiness, sense of belongingness and respect for each other were some items I found in the study that need to be considered in the mechanisms aimed at the transformation of the conflict. The responses of the key informants, residents and the participants in the FGDs point to these three ingredients as important to the peace process. This needs to be considered and included in the model for the attainment of peace in the protracted conflict. Peace practitioners, academics and people in the transformation, peacebuilding and conflict

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management of protracted conflicts are to consider these three variables in the peace process as the inclusion of culture in the mechanisms will contribute these to the attainment of peace.

There is currently a debate regarding whether conflict transformation or conflict resolution should be the approach and what conflict transformation mechanisms best suit the myriads of "new wars" that abound in the post-Cold War societies today. While some studies have argued for the use of indigenous mechanisms, others also argued in support of Western-centred approaches. The third group of scholars argue for the blend of the two. This research found that the indigenous mechanisms based on the cultures and cultural practices have the propensity to transform violent protracted conflicts.

Finally, this study contributes to the existing literature by developing a conceptual framework for conflict transformation by merging the theories that underpin the study. The conceptual framework outlines the key elements necessary for a sustainable transformation of protracted conflicts. It also covers the actions to take and the right time to take these actions in conflict situations.

Suggestions for Further Research

Considering the key findings of the study, the following areas are suggested for further research.

i.   The relevance of local cultural practices to be mainstreamed and used in mechanisms for conflict transformation in the Volta and Oti regions as the regions abound in such resource and ethnic conflicts.

ii.   The inclusion of religion and religious adherences in future research to ascertain their potential to result in the transformation of conflicts.

iii. Education or awareness creation on cultural or traditional practices is also a variable worthy of consideration in future research.

iv. The respect for human rights, which the indigenous or traditional mechanisms have been accused of not upholding can be better integrated into indigenous mechanisms, where the youth and women can be involved in the processes of conflict transformation.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHIEFS, ASSEMBLY MEMBERS AND

LOCAL LEADERS (ALAVANYO-NKONYA)

Dear Participant,

I, the Principal Investigator, Richard Ametefe from the University of Cape Coast, humbly request you to participate in this Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research project titled *Culture and Transformation of Protracted Social Conflicts in Ghana: A Study of the Alavanyo-Nkonya Conflict*. The research is designed to elicit information on the topic as part of my PhD studies at the University of Cape Coast. This interview guide is to elicit information mainly for academic purposes. Your voluntary participation entails you being interviewed by the principal investigator or a research assistant, and the information you provide will be considered confidential. Your participation is considered priceless and is deeply appreciated by the principal investigator. I do not also anticipate any risks or harm to you with respect to your involvement in this research project.

You are assured of full confidentiality, privacy and anonymity that all the information that you will give will not be used for other purposes besides the intended. Also, note that your name or identity will not be mentioned in any part of the report. You should therefore feel free to give me the right information to ensure the success of this work. You may decline to answer any question that you do not wish to respond to, and you can also withdraw from the interview any time that you feel uncomfortable. Your answering of this interview guide will presuppose that you have given your consent to participate in this research project. The interview will last about one hour. Thank you in advance for

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accepting to be part of this research project. Before we start the conversation, do you have any questions? Please feel free to ask any questions during the course of the interaction and I or the research assistant will be glad to respond to them. (Inform the key informants about the need to record the interview).

Bio-data:

How are you doing?

Can you tell me about yourself? (Age, sex, marital status, children, education level, occupation, duration of stay in the community)

Section A: The current state of the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict

1. Please tell me about your ethnic group and its history. (Probe for issues of dissent, first-comer status, indigene-settler issues, the conflict)

2. Tell us about the relationship between you and your neighbours (probe for causes of the conflict, and the course of the conflict).

3. Please share with me, the current level of the conflict. (Probe for personal views regarding the conflict, wins, failures, casualties since the year 2000 etc).

4. Level of participation in the resolution/transformation attempts (Probe for the involvement of parties, their culture and traditions).

5. Tell me about the current state of affairs (Probe for successful resolution/transformation of relations between the parties, whether are they okay so far, are there any lingering issues, sustainability of government takeover of the piece of land).

6. The protractedness of the conflict. (Probe for issues of protractedness- no culture or traditions, less or no participation, mechanisms being Western or foreign and not conducive for the people etc)

Section B: Cultural practices used during conflict situations by the Alavanyo and Nkonya

7. Tell us about the traditions or cultural practices of your people. (Probe for practices that are peculiar to their groups and other general ones that are practised by the other ethnic group).

   ((use the following and any other mentioned: **language (adages, proverbs), art (paintings & sculpture) / festival / marriage (to others) / customs / beliefs / libation pouring / belief in ancestors and gods / land inheritance**).

8. How can cultural practices be used in transforming violent conflicts? (Probe for these practices, how they can be used, successes and weaknesses in transforming violent conflicts).

9. Discuss with me some cultural practices that can be used in conflict situations to transform conflicts. (Probe for practices that have been used in the past and their successes and weaknesses).

10. Do you think cultural practices or traditions can also cause conflicts? (Probe for some aspects of their cultural practices that can cause the conflict and the ways this can be prevented).

11. Tell us any differences that exist between your cultural practices and that of your neighbour. (Probe for practices that can lead to or encourage conflicts).

Section C: Mechanisms to end the Alavanyo and Nkonya conflict

12. Discuss with us the mechanisms that were used to resolve the conflict between your group and the other in the past. (Probe for initiators, and who participated in the resolution attempts, the successes or otherwise).

13. How was culture given any consideration in the mechanisms adopted in the past? (Probe for their culture, ownership of the mechanisms and processes).

14. Were the mechanisms acceptable to you and your people (Probe for areas of dissent and whether they will like to see more done to make traditions more prominent).

15. How effective were these mechanisms? (Probe for strengths, weaknesses and prospects of these mechanisms).

Section D: Assess the role of cultural strategies in these mechanisms

16. Are you aware of any cultural practices that were included in the mechanisms? Name these cultural practices that were included.

((use the following and any other mentioned: **language (adages, proverbs), art (paintings & sculpture) / festival / marriage (to others) / customs / beliefs / libation pouring / belief in ancestors and gods – land / inheritance**).

17. How do you assess these cultural practices and strategies?

18. How did these contribute to the success of the mechanisms (Probe for failures and what can be done to improve on the mechanisms).

Section E: Potential for cultural strategies to restructure relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people

19. Can cultural strategies help to reform relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya? (Probe for strategies, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for use).

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20. What is the potential for cultural strategies to restructure relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people? (Probe for how these strategies can restructure relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people).

21. Tell me in what ways this restructuring can be achieved (Probe for potential failures and how these can be resolved).

Section F: Synthesise a model that uses culture to transform protracted social conflicts.

22. Tell me how we can ensure that cultural practices or traditions can be infused into mechanisms for effective conflict transformation.

23. How do you suggest that the cultural practices or traditions can be infused into conflict transformation strategies to enhance peaceful coexistence be the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups and others like that?

Thank you for your time and responses.

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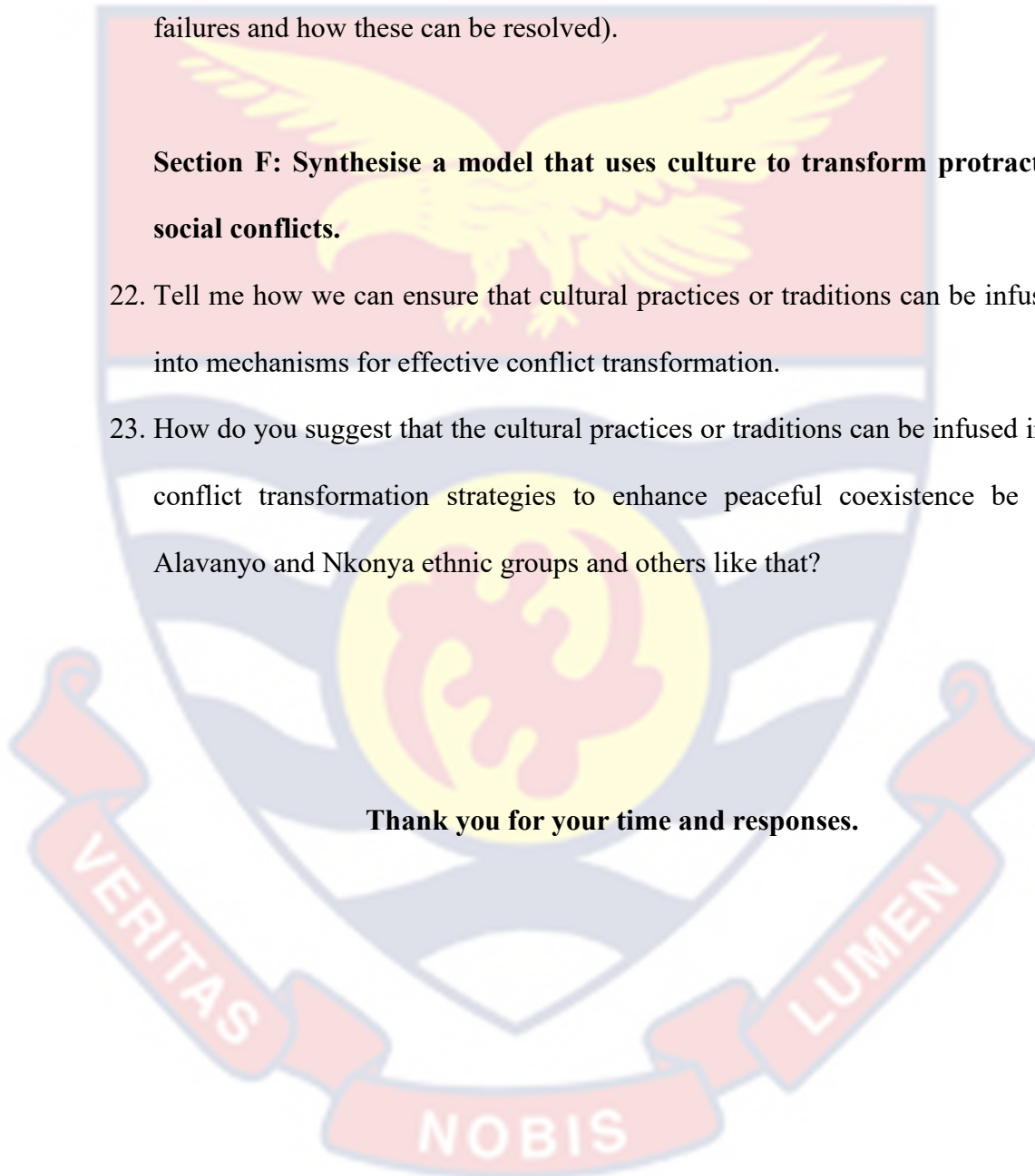
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITY

MEMBERS (ALAVANYO-NKONYA)

Dear Participant,

I, the Principal Investigator, Richard Ametefe from the University of Cape Coast, humbly request you to participate in this Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research project titled *Culture and Transformation of Protracted Social Conflicts in Ghana: A study of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict.* The research is designed to elicit information on the topic as part of my PhD studies at the University of Cape Coast. This interview guide is to elicit information mainly for academic purposes. Your voluntary participation entails you being interviewed by the principal investigator or a research assistant, and the information you provide will be considered confidential. Your participation is considered priceless and is deeply appreciated by the principal investigator. I do not also anticipate any risks or harm to you with respect to your involvement in this research project.

You are assured of full confidentiality, privacy and anonymity that all the information that you will give will not be used for other purposes besides the intended. Also, note that your name or identity will not be mentioned in any part of the report. You should therefore feel free to give me the right information to ensure the success of this work. You may decline to answer any question that you do not wish to respond to, and you can also withdraw from the interview any time that you feel uncomfortable. Your answering of this interview guide will presuppose that you have given your consent to participate in this research project. The interview will last about one hour. Thank you in advance for

accepting to be part of this research project. Before we start the conversation, do you have any questions? Please feel free to ask any questions during the course of the interaction and I or the research assistant will be glad to respond to them. (Inform the key informants about the need to record the interview).

Bio-data:

How are you doing?

Can you tell me about yourself? (Age, sex, ethnic group, marital status, education level, occupation, community and length of stay in the community)

Section A: Describe the current state of the Alavanyo and Nkonya protracted social conflict

1. Please tell me about your ethnic group and its history. (Probe for issues of dissent, first-comer status, indigene-settler issues, the conflict)

2. Tell us about the relationship between you and your neighbours (probe for causes and course of the conflict).

3. Involvement of ethnic groups in the final decision. (level of participation, sustainability of government takeover of the piece of land).

4. The protractedness of the conflict. (Probe for issues of protractedness- no culture or traditions, less or no participation, mechanisms being Western or foreign and not conducive for the people etc).

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Section B: Cultural practices used during conflict situations by the Alavanyo and Nkonya

5. Tell us about some traditional or cultural practices of your people (probe for practices that are peculiar to their groups and other general ones that can be found in the other group).

6. How can cultural practices be used in transforming violent conflicts? (Probe for their practices, how they can be used, their successes and weaknesses in transforming violent conflicts).

((use the following and any other mentioned: **language (adages, proverbs), art (paintings & sculpture) / festival / marriage (to others) / customs / beliefs / libation pouring / belief in ancestors and gods – land / inheritance**).

7. Discuss with us some of your cultural practices that can be used in conflict situations to transform conflicts. (Probe for practices that have been used in the past, their successes and weaknesses).

8. Share with me, some improvements in cultural practices that can help yield amicable transformation leading to sustainable peace between the two groups.

Section C: Mechanisms to end the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict

9. Discuss with us the mechanisms that were used to resolve the conflict in the past. (Probe for initiators, and who the participated in the resolution attempts, the successes or otherwise).

10. How was culture given any consideration in the mechanisms adopted in the past? (Probe for their culture, participation and ownership of the mechanisms and processes).

11. Consideration of your culture or traditions in recent mechanisms. (Probe for willingness to adopt culturally-informed mechanisms to transform the conflict, the likely successes).

12. How effective were these mechanisms? (Probe for the strengths, weaknesses and prospects of these mechanisms).

Section D: Role of cultural strategies in these mechanisms

13. Are you aware of any cultural practices included in the mechanisms? (Probe for these practices and their application).

(Use the following and any other mentioned: **language (adages, proverbs), art (paintings & sculpture) / festival / marriage (to others) / customs / beliefs / libation pouring / belief in ancestors and gods – land / inheritance**).

14. How effective were these mechanisms? (Probe for their successes, failures and what and prospects/if there are none, how do we inculcate these cultural practices or traditions into transformation mechanisms

15. Acceptability of these mechanisms to the Alavanyo and Nkonya people. (Probe for involvement, group acceptance and adoption of the mechanisms).

Section E: Potential of cultural strategies to restructure relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people

16. Would you say that the culture or traditions of the Alavanyo and Nkonya should be infused into mechanisms to transform the conflict?

17. Cultural strategies that can help to reform relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya. (Probe for strategies, potential successes, failures if any).

18. What is the potential for cultural strategies to restructure relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people? (Probe for these strategies to restructure relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people)

19. Ways to achieve a successful restructuring of the relationship between the Alavanyo and Nkonya. (Probe for successes, potential failures and how these can be resolved).

Section F: Synthesise a model that uses culture to transform protracted social conflicts.

20. Sustainability of culture or traditions in conflict transformation. (Probe for ways to make culture the engine to transform protracted conflicts, successes, and failures, if envisaged).

21. Suggest the cultural practices or traditions can be infused into conflict transformation strategies to enhance peaceful coexistence be the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups.

Thank you very much for your time and responses.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STATE INSTITUTIONS, CSOs (NPC, CNC, HoC, WANEP etc) AND SECURITY AGENCIES

Dear Participant,

I, the Principal Investigator, Richard Ametefe from the University of Cape Coast, humbly request you to participate in this Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research project titled *Culture and Transformation of Protracted Social Conflicts in Ghana: A study of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict.* The research is designed to elicit information on the topic as part of my PhD studies at the University of Cape Coast. This interview guide is to elicit information mainly for academic purposes. Your voluntary participation entails you being interviewed by the principal investigator or a research assistant, and the information you provide will be considered confidential. Your participation is considered priceless and is deeply appreciated by the principal investigator. I do not also anticipate any risks or harm to you with respect to your involvement in this research project.

You are assured of full confidentiality, privacy and anonymity that all the information that you will give will not be used for other purposes besides the intended. Also, note that your name or identity will not be mentioned in any part of the report. You should therefore feel free to give me the right information to ensure the success of this work. You may decline to answer any question that you do not wish to respond to, and you can also withdraw from the interview at any time that you feel uncomfortable. Your answers to this interview guide will presuppose that you have given your consent to participate in this research project. The interview will last about one hour. Thank you in advance for

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accepting to be part of this research project. Before we start the conversation, do you have any questions? Please feel free to ask any questions during the course of the interaction and I or the research assistant will be glad to respond to them. (Inform the key informants about the need to record the interview).

Bio-data:

How are you doing?

Can you tell me about yourself? (Age, sex, marital status, education level, occupation).

Section A: Current state of the Alavanyo-Nkonya protracted social conflict

1. Tell me about the relationship between the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups (Probe for causes of the conflict, course of the conflict, identity issues, land bit).

2. Please share with me the current level of the conflict. (Probe for personal views regarding the conflict, wins, failures, casualties since the year 2000, sustainability of government takeover of piece of land, etc).

3. Involvement of your institution in ending violence between the groups. (Probe for the role, course, successes or failure and why).

4. Level of participation in the resolution/transformation mechanisms. (Probe for what did not work, remedies).

5. The protractedness of the conflict. (Probe for issues of protractedness- no culture or traditions, less or no participation, mechanisms being western or foreign and not conducive for the people etc)

Section B: Cultural practices used during conflict situations by the Alavanyo and Nkonya

6. Can cultural practices be used in transforming violent conflicts? (Probe for these practices, how they can be used, successes and failures).

    (use the following and any other mentioned: **language (adages, proverbs), art (paintings & sculpture) / festival / marriage (to others) / customs / beliefs / libation pouring / belief in ancestors and gods – land / inheritance**).

7. Discuss with me some cultural practices or traditions that can be used in conflict situations to transform conflicts? (Probe for practices that have been used in the past, their successes and failures, which ones can lead to conflict and which ones do not and why).

8. Tell me any differences that exist in your cultural practices and that of your neighbour. (Probe for practices that perpetuate or encourage conflicts)

Section C: Mechanisms to end the Alavanyo and Nkonya protracted social conflict

9. Discuss with me the mechanisms that were used to resolve the conflict in the past. (Probe for initiators, and who participated in the resolution attempts, the successes or otherwise).

10. How was cultural practices or traditions considered in the mechanisms adopted in the past? (Probe for their cultural practices, who led the processes and the mechanisms used).

    ((use the following and any other mentioned: **language (adages, proverbs), art (paintings & sculpture) / festival / marriage (to others) / customs / beliefs / libation pouring / belief in ancestors and gods – land / inheritance**).

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11. Please elaborate on the mechanisms and the role your institution played in the design and implementation during the process.

Section D: Role of cultural strategies in these mechanisms

12. Are you aware of any cultural practices that were included in the mechanisms? (Probe for these practices, where and when they were used, were practices that of combatants, who led the process etc)

13. Institutional contribution to the success of the mechanisms. (Probe for successes, failures and what can be done to improve on the mechanisms).

14. Institution's willingness to adopt culturally-informed strategies to transform the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict. (Probe for the level of willingness, level of cooperation, and ways to do that).

Section E: Potential for cultural strategies to restructure relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya people

15. Cultural practices and traditions that help to reform relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya? (Probe for strategies, and their adequacy to reform relationships)

16. Tell me in what ways this restructuring can be achieved (Probe for potential failures and how these can be resolved).

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Section F: Synthesise a model that uses culture to transform protracted social conflicts.

17. Sustainability of culture or traditions in conflict transformation

18. How do you suggest that the cultural practices or traditions can be infused into conflict transformation strategies to enhance peaceful coexistence be the Alavanyo and Nkonya ethnic groups and others like that?

Thank you very much for your time and responses.

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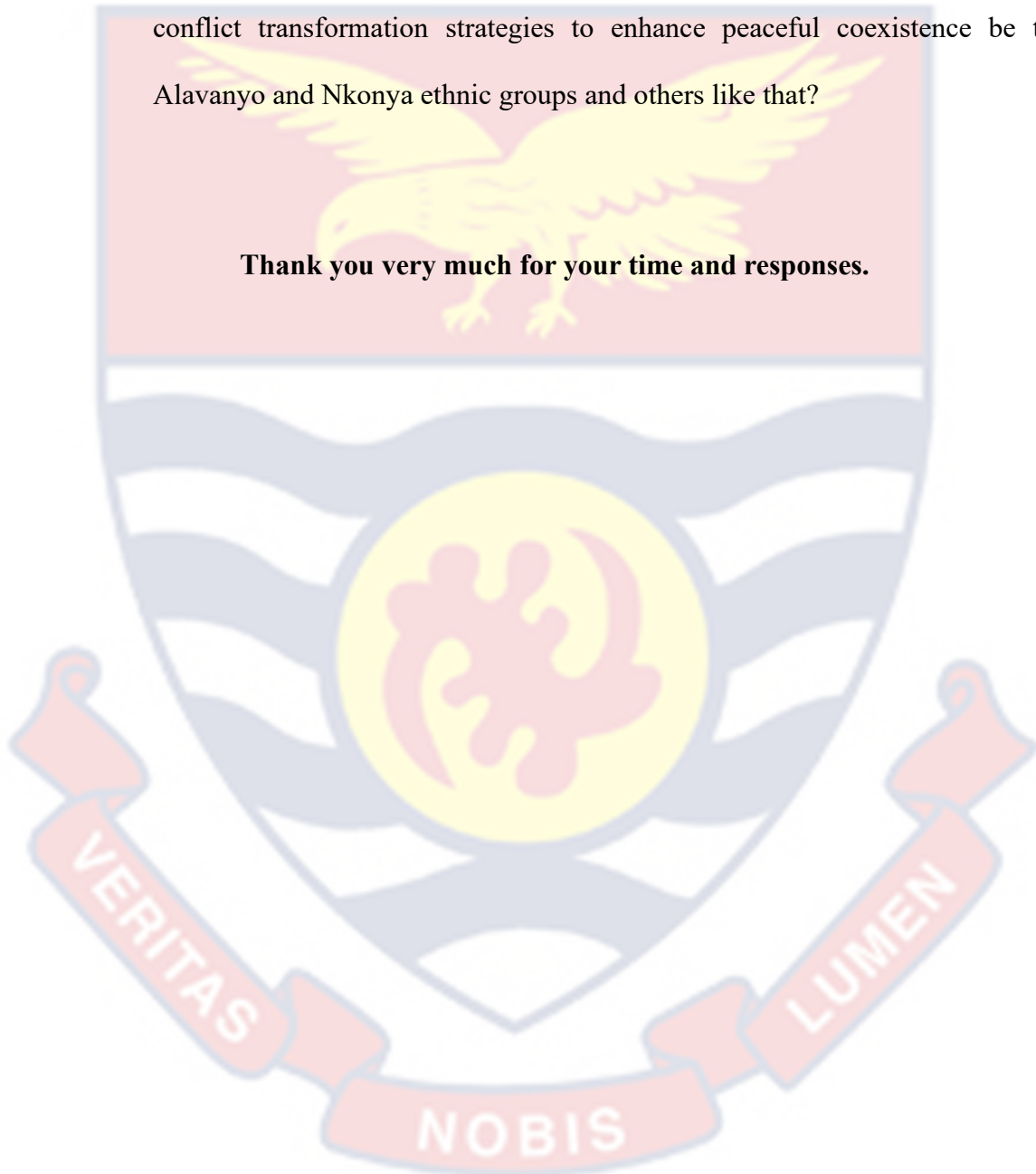
APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FOR RESIDENTS OF ALAVANYO

AND NKONYA

This research is being conducted by a student from the University of Cape Coast on ***Culture and Transformation of Protracted Social Conflicts in Ghana: A study of the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict***; as part of his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree programme. This interview guide is to elicit information mainly for academic purposes. You are assured of full confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of all the information that will be given by you. You should therefore feel free to contribute to this discussion to ensure the success of this work.

1. Current state of the conflict

   Contextual issues of the conflict (origin/history, causes, actors, and nature).

   We have heard about this conflict in the news, read about it in the books and how it has become protracted. What is your take on the government takeover of the piece of land?

2. Protractedness of the conflict

   Western-centred mechanisms that are available to them and/or used to manage the conflict (discuss who uses the mechanism and how the mechanism works, its accessible nature, its strengths, its weaknesses, and how to improve its efficiency and effectiveness).

3. Cultural practices/traditions and conflict transformation (its acceptability to past conflicts, strengths and weaknesses, which ones lead to conflict, the needed corrections, which ones do not, likelihood to continue with it

and successes).

((use the following and any other mentioned: **language (adages, proverbs), art (paintings & sculpture) / festival / marriage (to others) / customs / beliefs / libation pouring / belief in ancestors and gods – land / inheritance**).

4. Previous mechanisms used to end the conflict (what makes them choose a mechanism over the other, affordability, accessibility, or knowledge about the processes involved in the mechanism, the relationship between parties or perceived likelihood of success)

5. Cultural/Traditional strategies or mechanisms available for restructuring the conflictual relationships between the Alavanyo and Nkonya (discuss who adopts the mechanism and how the mechanism works, accessibility nature, its strengths, its weaknesses, and what can be done to improve its efficiency and effectiveness).

6. Way forward to sustainable culturally-informed conflict transformation (discuss what can be done to transform conflict using culture sustainably. Who are to be responsible for what should be clearly be defined).

Thank you for participating and God richly bless you.