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Source: *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, No. 16 (2014), pp. 111-132

Published by: Historical Society of Ghana

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26512499>

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AHAFO: BIG MEN, SMALL BOYS, AND THE POLITICS OF REGIONALISM IN GHANA 1954 -1986

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Introduction

The nationalists struggle in the Gold Coast (Ghana) reached its acme between 1948 and 1956 when political parties such as the United Gold Coast Convention, (UGCC), the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), Ghana Action Party, Togoland Congress, Muslim Association Party, Ghana National Party and the Northern People's Party, emerged in the Gold Coast as a medium of mobilizing the people to struggle for self-government or independence. Two of these political parties whose activities and policies impinged on the fortunes of Ahafo for better or for worse were the Convention People's Party (CPP) and the National Liberation Movement (NLM), later United Party (UP). In this paper we propose to examine how Kukuom Odikro, Yaw Frimpong, an astute politician, in conjunction with some chiefs and Ahafo youth exploited the rigorous political rivalry between the CPP and the NLM to their advantage to secure the creation of the Brong Ahafo Region out of the Ashanti Region, and the restoration of the Kukuom Ahafo State Council. For us to enjoy and appreciate our subject matter well, then, we need to first examine Ahafo from a historical standpoint.

Ahafo in a Historical Perspective

From 1901 when the British colonized Ashanti up to 1959 when the Brong Ahafo Region Act was passed, and the subsequent creation of that region in that same year, both the Ahafo and Brong districts of Ghana did not only constitute part of the Ashanti administratively, but traditionally, the headmen (Adikrofo) and chiefs were also members of the Asante Confederacy, restored in 1935 and later the Asanteman Council. Administratively, the Brong and Ahafo territories constituted one provincial administration - the Western Province of Ashanti - administered by a Provincial Commissioner at Sunyani, who was re-

sponsible to the Chief Commissioner in Kumasi. The various Bono states like Takyiman, Banda, Dormaa, Gyaman, Wenchi, and the like had been incorporated into the Asante kingdom through wars of conquest, while the Ahafo, who were subjects of the various Kumasi Wing Chiefs, and were of different backgrounds such as Denkyira, Akyem and Asante, were settled in the territory following the Asante's conquest and annexation of the land from Aowin between 1720 and 1722.¹

After the conquest and annexation of Ahafo land in 1722, the Kumasi Wing Chiefs over the years systematically established control of the Ahafo communities. From that time, Ahafo became an Asante dependency and was administered directly from Kumasi. Arhin observes that Ahafo 'as a distinct with the potentialities of an Oman state, had the most bizarre political constitution of an Akan state. There, the patch work of allegiance which was also introduced in Bono Manso (Techiman) ... was made the framework of the constitution.'² Each Ahafo village was thus a member of the division of the Kumasi overlord.

However, in 1896 following the exile of Prempeh I to Seychelles Island, Ahafo became a British protectorate after Captain Davidson Houston had signed the Treaty of Friendship and Protection at Kukuom with twelve Ahafo adikrofo. Ahafo became a British protectorate, provided with a traditional constitution which created three divisions, and made Kukuom Odikro the Omanhene and head of one of the divisions, while the Mim Odikro and Norbekaw Odikro were made heads of the Nifa (Right) and Benkum (Left) divisions respectively; and the rest of the Ahafo villages were subordinated to them. As part of the arrangement, the British distinguished the Ahafo who lived down-stream of the Tano River from those who were settled up-stream by referring to the former as Asunafo-Ahafo and the latter Asutifi Ahafo. During the 1900-1901 Yaa Asantewaa war, the Omanhene of Asunafo-Ahafo, Barimansu

¹ Kwame Osei Kwarteng, *Ahafo C 1719-1959 from Dependence to Independence*, M.Phil Thesis presented to Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, 2000, pp. 9-10; see also Kwame Osei Kwarteng, 'The Asante Conquest of Ahafo in the 18th Century : A Historical Legacy' in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New series, no.6, 2002, pp62-66.

² Kwame Arhin, 'The Structure of the Greater Ashanti', *Research Review*, Institute of African Studies (IAS), Legon, 1977, p. 17.

of Kukuom joined forces with the Asante warriors in an uprising against the British. That notwithstanding, the British administration after quelling the uprising maintained the Asunafo–Ahafo Paramountcy as a single chiefdom, provided it with a charter and supported it with its power and prestige.³

It is significant to note that despite the foregoing deal, which undoubtedly elevated Noberkaw and Mim from Odikro status to Divisional chiefs, Tordoff notes that in 1896, chief Beditor of Mim signed the Treaty of Friendship and Protection reluctantly because he and his people found their uncustomary subordination to Kukuom irksome.⁴ For this reason, between 1900 and 1914 he made several attempts to undermine the unity of the Asunafo–Ahafo paramountcy.⁵ Just as Mim was not willing to be subservient to Kukuom, Kenyasi I and Ntotroso, non-signatories to the treaty between the British and the Ahafo were also unenthusiastic to serve the Mimhene as stipulated by the traditional constitution. The British colonial government only used force or intimidation before it could subject the two villages to Mimhene.⁶

Besides, there was no unity in the Asunafo–Ahafo paramountcy. For instance, in 1932 an intense conflict erupted between the Omanhene, Kwaku Mensah and the Noberkawhene, Kwabena Atta which had wide ramification on Ahafo. The paramountcy was divided into two irreconcilable opposing factions, which engendered a constitutional crisis in Ahafo. The problem was so acute that the Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, Newlands, described Asunafo–Ahafo paramountcy in uncomplimentary terms as a ‘troublesome Division’ and was ‘reluctantly compelled to regard the Ahafo people as being incapable of governing

³ Kwame Arhin, ‘Aspects of Colonial District Administration: The case of North Western District of Ashanti 1904–1911’, *Research Review*, Vol. 8 No. 1-3, IAS, Legon, 1971–1972, p4.

⁴ William Tordoff, *Ashanti Under the Prempeh, 1888-1936*, Oxford University Press, London, 1965, p138.

⁵ Kwarteng, M.Phil thesis, op cit, pp. 73–80.

⁶ Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD), Kumasi, ARG1/2 /21 Extract from Provincial Record Book, Western Province of Ashanti(WPA); see also Tordoff, op cit, p164; see also K.O. Kwarteng, ‘Extension of British Rule to Ahafo, 1896-1914, in *Journal of Philosophy and Culture*, vol. 1, no. 1 (January 2004), p. 145.

themselves⁷. Consequently, two cases in Ahafo, (i) a succession dispute at Mim, and (ii) charges of impropriety against the Omanhene that could not be adjudicated by the Asunafo–Ahafo Traditional Council, had to be referred to the Kumasihene, Prempeh II for resolution.⁸ It was therefore not surprising that on 31 January 1935 when the British colonial administration decided to restore the Asante Confederacy, it abrogated the Asunafo–Ahafo paramountcy and returned all the Ahafo chiefs to their pre-1896 allegiances at Kumasi.

Though the prevailing circumstances in Ahafo did not make it worthwhile to maintain the Asunafo–Ahafo Paramountcy by 1935, the Chief Commissioner of Asante did not take a unilateral decision in abrogating it. He consulted the Omanhene, Kwaku Mensa and the major Ahafo chiefs in 1932 about the possibilities of restoring the Asante kingdom to its former status. Initially, the Omanhene expressed reservation about the restoration since he was not sure of what his status would be under the confederacy, but in due course, he supported the proposal, and indicated that anytime he visited Kumasi he never failed to go and salute the Akuroponhene, the former overlord of Kukuom under the Asante Kingdom. Moreover, the Omanhene agreed that after the restoration, the Ahafo chiefs should again serve the Asantehene through their overlords in Kumasi, but he should be allowed to maintain his Omanhene status.⁹

The demand or insistence of the Omanhene that Kukuom should be permitted to retain its paramountcy was never lost on the elders of Kukuom after the destoolment of Kwaku Mensah in 1933, two years before the restoration. The elders of Kukuom in affirming their endorsement of the restoration of the confederacy to the Chief Commissioner in July 1933 enquired whether the Kukuomhene would continue as the Omanhene of Ahafo after the restoration.¹⁰

⁷ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/2/1/21 from Assistant Chief Commissioner, Ashanti, Kumasi, to Chief Commissioner, Ashanti, Kumasi, on Ahafo Native Affairs, 15th July 1932.

⁸ Kwarteng, M.Phil Thesis op. cit, p83–91.

⁹ Tordoff, op cit, p118.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The Noberkawhene, although he was hostile to Kukuomhene Kwaku Mensah and played an active role in his destoolment, was nevertheless, halfhearted about the restoration of the confederacy. In a communication to the District Commissioner in Sunyani, Noberkawhene cautioned: 'if we serve at Kumasi the whole of Ahafo will become entangled as all the sub-chiefs in this District have got different masters at Kumasi and our so performing will bring our District into a ruined condition.'¹¹ The Mimhene however, unreservedly welcomed the proposal, and together with most of the Ahafo Adikrofo he welcomed the restoration of the Asante Confederacy with alacrity, because, they chafed their subordination to Kukuom. Apart from Mim, all the Adikrofo felt that their over three decades of subordination to the Divisional heads of Kukuom, Noberkaw and Mim was a torment and would be relieved under the confederacy.

Ahafo under the Asante Confederacy

The expectations of the Ahafo Adikrofo were shattered under the confederacy as they never fared better than they were under the Asunafo-Ahafo Paramountcy. Having secured the right to once more exercise authority over the Ahafo, the various Kumasi overlords subjected the Ahafo to treatments which I have described as 'humiliating, exploitative, extortionate and intimidating.'¹² With the exception of the Odikro of Sankore who received a humane treatment from the Atipinhene, his overlord,¹³ the rest were victimised and disrespected by their Kumasi overlords. A few examples will suffice here:

(i) At their own leisure and convenience the Kumasi overlords could summon any chief from Ahafo without observing the proper protocol. In 1937 several Ahafo Adikrofo were at one time or another summoned

¹¹ John Dunn and A.F Robertson, *Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Ahafo*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1973, p. 245.

¹² Kwarteng, M.Phil thesis, Op cit, p.121.

¹³ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: Report on the Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 30th June 1937.

to Kumasi, where they were kept waiting for several days and even weeks without receiving any attention from the overlords.¹⁴

(ii) A chieftaincy dispute arose at Noberkaw and the elders were summoned to Kumasi by the Akyeamehene, who asked them to install his favoured candidate, though that candidate had previously been destooled by the elders for misappropriating stool funds.¹⁵

(iii) Another succession dispute erupted at Kukuom and the kingmakers nominated and elected a candidate and presented him to the Akuroponhene, but he rejected the kingmakers' choice and rather supported the candidacy of Kwaku Mensa, the ex-Omanhene destooled in 1933. All attempts by the kingmakers to persuade the Akuroponhene to accept their candidate proved futile. The kingmakers of Kukuom spent seven months at Akuropon negotiating for the acceptance of their candidate. It was only after the Akuroponhene had been severely rebuked by the District Commissioner of Kumasi that the enstoolment of the Kukuomhene-elect could take place.¹⁶

(iv) The Ahafo also suffered arbitrary arrest and fines by the Kumasi overlords. In early 1937 the Ntotroso people realized that their Odikro was about to give their land to the chief of Barikese, for which reason, they destooled him. When the Bantamahene learnt of this, he sent a messenger and seven policemen from Kumasi to arrest the people of Ntotroso. The police and the messenger entered the Ntotroso stool house (palace), forced open the boxes, dug up the places in the stool house where all the stool money was hidden and took away over £1000.¹⁷

(v) Besides, the police and the messenger took away the stools and stool properties and threw them into the bush.¹⁸ Thereafter, they arrested almost the entire leadership and people of Ntotroso, Gyedu and Wamahinso and took them to Kumasi and put them in cells. In the trial that followed, the Bantamahene fined the people £45 including 3 sheep

¹⁴ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: Sinclair Assistant District Commissioner of Goaso's report on Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 30th June 1937.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, report on the Ahafo for the Quarter ending 30th September 1937.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, report on Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 31st December, 1937.

for destooling a chief without his approval and charged them £60 as bail fees.¹⁹ The Ntotroso people alleged they paid £30 for six lorries, which transported them from Ntotroso to Kumasi; paid £20 to the Bantamahene as *aseda*²⁰ and £65 as bribe to the Kumasi chiefs: in all they spent £200 which they had to borrow from someone in Kumasi.²¹ Though the Bantamahene denied some of the allegations of the Ntotroso people as figment of their imagination, his confirmation of the mass arrest of the Ntotroso people clearly is a pointer to the fact that the Kumasi overlords treated their Ahafo subjects after the restoration with high-handedness and disdain.

(vi) Apart from the ill-treatment the Kumasi overlords meted out to the Ahafo, they also exploited the financial resources of Ahafo to enrich themselves to the neglect of the development of Ahafo communities. Though customarily and legally the Kumasi chiefs were entitled to some percentage of the royalties, tributes and ground rents and forest reserve gratuities from Ahafo as landlords, nonetheless, the way and manner they went about it was tantamount to exploitation. Immediately the confederacy was restored, the Kumasi chiefs re-asserted their ownership of the Ahafo lands and began to claim royalties, tributes, ground rents and forest reserve gratuities from Ahafo.

(vii) Moreover, they assumed the responsibility of alienating Ahafo forest lands to strangers or land speculators who came to Ahafo in search of land for farming, mining and logging purposes. The Ahafo Adikrofo, then, reverted to their previous role as caretakers which made it extremely impossible for them to alienate land without the express permission or approval of the Kumasi landlords, nor could they sign leases without Kumasi participation.²² For instance, in 1937 United Africa Company (UAC) and Cadbury Fry obtained leases of building plots at Goaso at a rent of £5 and £3 per annum respectively.²³

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Thanksgiving

²¹ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: report on Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 31st December, 1937.

²² Kwarteng, M.Phil op cit, p. 124.

²³ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: report on Ahafo District by District Commissioner (D.C.) 21st February 1938.

(viii) The logical thing was that because the plot was situated at Goaso, the Odikro of Goaso alone would carry out the transaction of leasing out the plot to the two companies. However, this was not the case. The Akwaboahene, the landlord, the Mim Odikro, the caretaker of the Akwaboahene, and the Goaso Odikro as a sub-caretaker each claimed a share in the rent. Therefore, the three chiefs signed the lease of Cadbury Fry, but in the case of the UAC only the Akwaboahene and Mim Odikro signed the lease.²⁴ Akwaboahene after signing the leases with the two Ahafo Adikrofo surprisingly took all the £8 and never gave them anything.²⁵

(ix) Such was the rapacity of the Akwaboahene that he even exploited the Kubi shrine of Ayomso. The Akwaboahene, the landlord of Ayomso stool lands claimed a portion of the revenue which Kubi shrine derived from its patrons by stationing a clerk at Ayomso to collect one-third of the revenue which was his quota, while Ayomsohene and Kubi shrine took one-third each.²⁶

(x) The Akwaboahene was not the only Kumasi chief who deprived and cheated the Ahafo of their financial resources. The Hiahene who also owned part of the Ahafo lands made persistent demands of tributes, rents and gratuity from Ahafo. For example, in October 1937 the Hiahene called on the Assistant District Commissioner at Goaso to obtain permission to tour all the villages situated on his stool lands, so that he could conclude written agreements with the chiefs regarding the collection and disposal of tributes from settler farmers. The request was declined by the Assistant District Commissioner, who saw the whole scheme as not only unsatisfactory and undesirable, but also as an attempt to deprive the Ahafo of the bulk of the revenue from the area. Moreover, the D.C. reported the matter to the Asantehene who warned the Hiahene not to make any financial raid into Ahafo.²⁷

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, report on the Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 30th September 1937.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, the Hiahene proposed to the D.C. that the tribute should be divided into three equally parts among, himself, the Asantehene and the caretaker chief. In other words each party would take one-third.

(xi) The financial deprivation and cheating of the Ahafo Adikrofo by the Kumasi chiefs manifested also in the payment of forest reserve gratuity. The forest reserve gratuities from Ahafo were paid to the Asantehene, who in turn paid the Ahafo chiefs their share. But this arrangement was fraught with abuse. In fact the Ahafo chiefs did not even know how much was due them, and the clerks of the Asantehene's office capitalized on this ignorance and demanded commission from the meagre share that the Ahafo chiefs received. For example, one of the Adikrofo complained that a clerk of the Asantehene's office 'claimed a commission of £4 on every gratuity of £15.10.0d for his services and the messenger who had been sent for the money handed over the £4'.²⁸ Besides, in 1938 the Abuom Odikro complained that the Nyinahinhene, his overlord collected Abuom share of the gratuity from Bonsam Bepo Forest Reserve and appropriated it.²⁹

The exploitation of Ahafo by the Kumasi chiefs reached the crest and became unbearable in late 1938, when both the Hiahene and Akwaboahene requested the District Commissioner, Kumasi, to permit them to inspect farms in Ahafo and conclude written agreements with the Adikrofo on tribute. However, both the Assistant District Commissioner, Goaso and District Commissioner, Kumasi objected to such moves on the grounds that it was improper to allow individual chiefs from Kumasi to enter into agreements with the Adikrofo regarding tribute payment.³⁰ To tackle the problem once and for all, the District Commissioner recommended to the Chief Commissioner of Asante, to devise a scheme that would be acceptable to all the stakeholders of Ahafo lands for the sharing of tributes. In the estimation of the D.C, this would be beneficial to all the parties and the government as well.³¹

The suggestion of the D.C was deemed laudable and acceptable by Chief Commissioner; therefore, he contacted the Asantehene about it. After intensive consultations between the two, it was agreed that the

²⁸ Ibid, report on the Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 31st December, 1937.

²⁹ Ibid, report on the Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 30th September, 1938.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ PRAAD Kumasi, ARG1/2/157: Tribute in Ahafo—Collection—from the D.C. Kumasi to the Chief Commissioner, Asante, Kumasi, 15th December 1938.

Asantehene should work out a blue print for the division of tributes from Ahafo.³² Subsequently, the Asantehene on 25th October, 1939 invited the Hiahene, the Akwaboahene, the Nyinahinhene, the Nkwawie Paninhene and the Essuonwinhene, who were the landlords of Ahafo to Manhyia Palace. With the assistance of some of his elders, he first settled all the boundary disputes between the landlords of Ahafo and finally partitioned the Ahafo lands among them by defining the boundaries properly for them.³³

The Asantehene held another meeting with the Ahafo landlords on 11th November 1939 on the division of tribute from Ahafo. The substance of the agreement was that whatever tribute that would be collected from settler farmers in Ahafo should be divided as follows:

- (i) three ninth to the Golden Stool;
- (ii) four ninth to the landlords and
- (iii) two ninth to the caretaker chiefs.³⁴

The Ahafo appeared to be dissatisfied with the arrangement, because, it did not serve their interest, but dared not raise any challenge. They saw the whole scheme as skewed towards the Kumasi chiefs and the Asantehene who were the supposed landlords. Above all, rather than halting the exploitation of the Ahafo resources by the Kumasi chiefs, the format instead facilitated that process. From that time to 1958 when the CPP government passed the Ashanti Stool Lands Act (No.28 of 58) which transferred the trusteeship and management of all lands vested in the Golden Stool and its occupant, the Asantehene, to the Governor-General,³⁵ the Kumasi chiefs alienated large portions of the virgin forest of Ahafo to land speculators for the establishment of cocoa and oil-palm plantations; and also leased forest reserves to timber concessionaires to set up timber firms. These earned them thousands of

³² PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: report on Ahafo District for the Quarter ending June, 1939.

³³ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/2/157:Ahafo Lands, from D. C. Kumasi to Chief Commissioner Asante, Kumasi, 14th December, 1939.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Brempong Arhin, *Transformation in Traditional Rule in Ghana (1951–1996)*, Sedco, Accra, 2001, p. 37.

pounds which they used in constructing many huge storey-buildings in Kumasi, but they did not build even a thatched house in any of the Ahafo towns.

Despite the ill-treatments the Ahafo received from their Kumasi overlords, the Asantehene gave the Ahafo a representation on the council of Kumasi State and on the Asante Confederacy Council. The Odikro of Mim, Kwaku Appiah, was made the spokesman and representative of the Ahafo on these councils.³⁶ But some of the Ahafo, particularly, those who had Denkyira background, did not see that as the answer to their predicament. Those people believed that the best solution to their plight was the restoration of the Kukuom paramountcy.

Kukuomhene Yaw Frimpong: Party Politics, Regionalism, and Paramountcy

Those Ahafos who believed that the restoration of the Kukuom paramountcy was the answer to Ahafo troubles had their expectation brightened up when Yaw Frimpong acceded the Kukuom stool as Odikro in 1944. Dunn and Robertson describe him as 'a more astute and determined politician than his predecessor who...lacked the political sensitivity to recognize that acquiescence in the reestablishment of the Ashanti confederacy in 1935 would imply the sacrifice of his paramountcy and the return of Ahafo to Kumasi yoke.'³⁷ His first preoccupation after acceding to the stool was to retrieve the loss of the Kukuom paramountcy by mobilizing the resources at his disposal within and beyond the district.³⁸ Between 1944 and 1948 his efforts met with little success. However, the emergence of partisan politics in the Gold Coast and Asante gave impetus to his struggle to salvage the Kukuom paramountcy.

In 1949, the Convention People's Party, a break-away faction from the United Gold Coast Convention was formed under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. This new party, which derived its strength mainly from individual youth and the youth movement, won the 1951 election,

³⁶ Dunn and Robertson, *Op. cit.*, p. 246; See also Kwame Osei Kwarteng, 'A Political History of Mim: 1896-1966', BA Long Essay, Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, 1991, p. 45.

³⁷ Dunn and Robertson, *Op. cit.*, p. 246.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

for which reason, Kwame Nkrumah was released from prison and offered the position of Leader of Government Business.³⁹ However, in 1954 due to two main policy decisions of the CPP government, namely, the re-demarcation and regional distribution of the electoral districts, and cocoa politics, which the Asante youth in the CPP and Asante chiefs found to be inimical to the Asante interest, necessitated the formation of NLM.⁴⁰ The Asantehene supported the NLM which was vehemently opposed to the CPP government. Between 1954 and 1956 an intense political rivalry ensued between the CPP and the NLM and their allied chiefs with the latter advocating for a federal constitution, while the former maintained it should be a unitary.⁴¹

Initially the Kukuom Odikro, Yaw Frimpong joined the NLM, but later he defected to the CPP on the grounds that the Mim Odikro, Kwaku Appiah, who was literate and the Ahafo representative on the Asanteman Council, had taken advantage of his position as the Ahafo representative in Kumasi to undermine Kukuom's bid to regain the paramountcy.⁴² The Mim Odikro's ambition was to fight for the reestablishment of the Ahafo state, with himself appointed as the paramount chief of Ahafo. He also hoped that such a division should continue to be part of the Asante confederacy, but should not be subordinated to the Kumasi Wing Chiefs.⁴³ Thus, the Kukuom Odikro realized that he would be fighting a losing battle if he continued to remain a member of the NLM. That was the rationale behind his defection to the CPP.⁴⁴

The Kukuom Odikro, Yaw Frimpong, was assisted in his struggle by the formation of the Brong Kyempim Federation spearheaded by Techimanhene, Akumfi Ameyaw and Dormahene, Agyeman Badu, who

³⁹ Mary A. Seiwea Owusu, *Prempeh II and the Making of Modern Asante*, Woeli, Accra, 2009, p. 103, 105.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; See also A. Adu Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Longman, London, 2000, pp 182–183.

⁴¹ D.E.K. Amenumey, *Ghana: A Concise History from Pre-Colonial Times to the 20th Century*, Woeli, Accra, 2008, p. 213.

⁴² Dunn and Robertson, *op cit*, p.246.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Kwarteng, M.Phil Thesis, p.131.

nursed the ambition of seceding from the Asanteman Council.⁴⁵ Tradition relates that:

One day when Agyeman Badu was a teenager, he visited Manhyia Palace with his uncle, the then Omanhene of Dormaa, who was embarrassed by the palace hands (servants of the Asantehene). The servants rudely ordered the Omanhene of Dormaa and his entourage to remain in the scorching sun until the Asantehene would be ready to attend to them. The Omanhene and his retinue stood in the blazing sun for at least two hours. This maltreatment and disregard towards the Dormaaahene offended the sensibilities of the future Omanhene, Agyeman Badu who had accompanied his revered uncle to Manhyia.⁴⁶

For this reason, Agyeman Badu nurtured a grudge against the Asanteman, and as an enlightened young man, as soon as he acceded the Dormaa stool, forged an alliance with the Techimanhene, Akumfi Ameyaw, who was equally dissatisfied with Asante hegemony, to start a secessionist movement –the Brong Kyempim Federation– in 1952,⁴⁷ exactly a year after Kwame Nkrumah had become the leader of Government Business. In order to win the CPP Government recognition for the separation of the Brong territory from the Asanteman Council, the Dormaaahene and Techimanhene realized that their best chance of success depended upon throwing their support to the CPP government.⁴⁸

According to Arhin, in 1952, because Asanteman Council had not openly allied itself with the opponents of the CPP, Nkrumah set up a committee, chaired by Nene Azu Mate Kole, the Konor of Manya Krobo, to mediate between the Asanteman Council and the dissident Brong chiefs. However, in 1954 as soon as the Asanteman Council became openly antagonistic to the CPP, then, Nkrumah made a common cause with the Brong chiefs, and seriously took the necessary measures that

⁴⁵ Dunn and Robertson, *op cit*, pp. 246–7, see also Seiwaa Owusu, *op. cit.*, p. 126, Arhin Brempong, *op cit*, p.21.

⁴⁶ Information obtained from Ms Mary Owusu. She informed the writer that Mr. G.K. Owusu, 67 years, resident in Tanoso Kumasi in 2009 gave her this information.

⁴⁷ B. Arhin, *op cit*, p.21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

would ensure that the Brong chiefs assert their independence from the Asanteman Council.⁴⁹ Having received the assurance of support from the CPP government, the Techimanhene led the Brong chiefs to renounce their membership of the Asanteman Council.⁵⁰

When Kukuom Odikro, Yaw Frimpong, realized he shared parallel aspiration with the Dormaahene, Agyeman Badu and the Techimanhene, Akumfi Ameyaw, he gravitated towards them to fight for a common cause – the creation of a separate and independent region, and then the restoration of the Ahafo paramountcy.⁵¹ Accordingly, on 17th April 1956, Odikro Yaw Frimpong sent a petition with fifteen signatories to the Government in Accra. Copies of the petition were sent to the Governor, the Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, the Minister of Local Government, the Ministerial Secretary to the Prime Minister, three Ministers and their permanent secretaries, as well as sixteen Members of Parliament (MP), the Regional and District Administrative officers.⁵²

The petition elucidated: (i) that the Ahafo agreed to join the Asante confederacy with the understanding that the Kukuomhene would retain his Omanhene status. However, the Asantehene had not honoured that; (ii) that Ahafo was not given representation on the Asanteman Council, and that the representation of the Mimhene, who before 1935 was the Nifahene of Ahafo and therefore a subject to the Omanhene of Ahafo, as a member of the Asanteman Council was customarily wrong; (iii) that the Ahafo had derived no benefit from the work of the Asante Regional Development Committee; (iv) that before 1935, Ahafo and the Brong had been administered from the provincial headquarters at Sunyani, therefore, the Ahafo wanted the creation of a new region in Asante to promote more development.⁵³ The petition concluded that the Ahafo had been with the Asante for long and yet the Ahafo area was still underdeveloped and therefore the Ahafo could no longer go with the Asante, but wanted to go with the Brong for administrative and devel-

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 24.

⁵⁰ Dunn and Robertson, *op cit*, p. 246-7.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

⁵² PRAAD, Sunyani, RAO2/83, from Nana Yaw Frimpong, Kukuomhene et al, Kukuom, to the Governor, Accra, 17th April 1956.

⁵³ PRAAD, Sunyani, from RAO2/83, from Nana Yaw Frimpong... *op cit*, see also Dunn and Robertson, *op cit*, p247-250.

opment progress, and that the Kukuomhene be recognized by the government as the Omanhene of Ahafo.⁵⁴

A critical examination of the signatories of the petition reveals that they were CPP members. Further, the petition did not represent the views and aspiration of the majority of Ahafo. Out of the twenty-eight stools in Ahafo only seven chiefs signed the petition: Kukuom, Dantano, Sienna, Kenyasi II, Ayomso, Etwineto and Hwidiem. Moreover, six of the signatories were Kukuom elders with two other people representing Kenyasi I and Acherensua. The foregoing analysis made me⁵⁵ conclude that the petition was seeking the parochial interest of Kukuom Odikro, Yaw Frimpong, and not the Ahafo as a whole, since the majority of the Ahafo chiefs were not signatories to it.

For unexplained reasons the government did not respond to the petition, so it did not achieve the desired results. But due to Kukuom Odikro, Yaw Frimpong's tenacity of purpose, he repeated the petition. This time it was addressed to the Minister of Local Government. The signatories were the same seven chiefs and the representatives of nineteen towns and villages, who were all CPP members. Fortunately for the petitioners, they realized their objective. Assurance of support was exchanged between the CPP leaders in Accra, the Brong chiefs and Yaw Frimpong and his supporters. Accordingly, as soon as the CPP government was returned to power after the July 1956 elections, which led to Ghana's Independence, the CPP leaders began to honour the promises they had made to the party's supporters in Asante.⁵⁶

The first thing the CPP government did for its loyal supporters in Asante was that when taking a decision to include the traditional councils in the Independence Day celebration on 6th March 1957, an equal number of invitations was given to both the Asanteman Council and the Brong Kyempim movement. In the following week, a new regulation published in the Gold Coast Gazette gave the Techimanhene and

⁵⁴ PRAAD, Sunyani, from RAO2/83, from Nana Yaw Frimpong..., op cit; see also, Dunn and Robertson, op. cit., pp. 247-250.

⁵⁵ Kwarteng, M.Phil thesis, op. cit., p.132.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 133.

Dormaaahene the right in constitutional disputes to appeal to the Governor-General instead of the Asanteman Council.⁵⁷

Another action the CPP government took to express its appreciation to its supporters in Asante, and to fulfill its promises to the Brong and Ahafo chiefs it was in league with, was to initiate the process towards creation of a separate region. The 1957 Constitution (Order-in-Council), made provision for the creation of five regions, namely, Eastern (including the present Greater Accra); Western (including the present Central Region); Ashanti (including the present Brong Ahafo) Region; Northern (including the present Upper East and Upper West) Regions; and Transvolta/ Togoland (the present Volta Region).⁵⁸ However, in October 1957 when announcing the posting of Regional Commissioners with effect from 1 November, Asante alone was assigned two Commissioners, meaning Western Ashanti, which was occupied by the Brong and the Ahafo, was effectively being elevated to the status of a region separate from Ashanti.⁵⁹ To this end in 1959 the Brong Ahafo Region Act was passed,⁶⁰ thus giving legal backing to two-thirds of Asante territory carved out to form the Brong Ahafo Region.⁶¹

Meanwhile, in February 1958 the Ministry of Local Government officially recognized the Kukuomhene as a paramount chief.⁶² This restoration however, did not terminate the allegiance of Kukuomhene to the Asantehene; neither did it subordinate the rest of the Ahafo Adikrofo to Kukuom as was done in 1896. This meant that the paramountcy was not independent of Kumasi, and that being the case then, the influence of the Kumasis in Ahafo would persist. The Kukuomhene, therefore, came to a stark realization that the only way he and his small group of supporters could consolidate the independence of the New Ahafo State Council was to collaborate with the Brong chiefs to campaign for a new region which would divide the existing Ashanti Region into two. He hoped to use his membership of the proposed Brong Ahafo House of

⁵⁷ Seiwaa Owusu, *op cit*, p. 126.

⁵⁸ Arhin Brempong, *op cit*, p. 25, see Seiwaa Owusu, *op cit*, p. 133.

⁵⁹ Seiwaa Owusu, *op cit*, p. 134.

⁶⁰ Arhin Brempong, *op cit*, p. 37.

⁶¹ Seiwaa Owusu, *op cit*, p. viii.

⁶² Dunn and Robertson, *op cit*, p. 250.

Chiefs to disclaim any political bonds with Asante and repudiate Kumasi demand for allegiance of any Ahafo Odikro.⁶³

The immediate reaction of majority of the Ahafo Adikrofo who were members of the opposition U.P was to vehemently oppose the elevation of Kukuom to paramouncy, but their protestation yielded no positive results. The Minister of Local Government, on 10th February 1958, informed the Kukuomhene and seven other chiefs in Asante who were restored to paramount status to swear oath of allegiance to the Asantehene as a prerequisite for their recognition by the Government as Amanhene.⁶⁴

Yaw Frimpong, the new paramount chief of Kukuom, notified the Minister of Local Government through the Government Agent in Kumasi that at the time of his installation in 1944, he swore the oath of allegiance to the Asantehene.⁶⁵ This explanation appears to have satisfied the Local Government Minister, who almost immediately sanctioned the inauguration of the newly created Kukuom Ahafo State Council, which was attended by eight Ahafo Adikrofo, namely, Dantano, Wamahinso, Etweneto, Ayomso, Sienna, Kenyasi II and the Regent of Acherensua. The Kukuomhene was elected the President of the Council with the Vice President position going to Kwabena Nsia Ababio, Kenyasi II Odikro. T.N. Baidoo was appointed the secretary of the council. This was followed by the Government gazette of the fourteen members of the State Council in June 1958.⁶⁶

The pro-Asante Adikrofo who were not listed in the Government gazette reacted concertedly to the Government recognition of the Kukuom-Ahafo State Council. They constituted themselves into loose Association of Ahafo chiefs under the leadership of the Odikro of Mim. They attempted to persuade the Asantehene to establish an Ahafo Council of chiefs within the confederacy structure, but lack of unity and political strength militated against their opposition to the Kukuom-

⁶³ Ibid, p. 252

⁶⁴ PRAAD, Sunyani, RAO 2/83: from the Minister of Local Government, Accra to the Secretary to the Regional Commissioner, Kumasi, 10th February, 1958.

⁶⁵ Ibid, from the Government Agent, Kumasi to the Regional Commissioner, Kumasi, 2nd May 1958.

⁶⁶ Dunn and Robertson, op cit, p. 252.

hene's political aggrandizement.⁶⁷ As members of the opposition party, they were politically disadvantaged, therefore, their fortunes declined steadily. However, they were able to rebuff an attempt by the Regional Commissioner to persuade them to join the Kukuom-Ahafo State Council by declaring: 'your proposition is unacceptable to us both morally and legally.'⁶⁸ They reminded the Regional Commissioner in their letter that Kukuom, like any town or village in Ahafo, was customarily an Odikro, and that they all served the Asantehene through their respective Kumasi Wing Chiefs and as such their stools belonged to the Kumasi State Council.⁶⁹ The letter was signed by twelve chiefs who opined that 'Kukuom by customary law of Ashanti is not and never has been a state: and if a state we the undersigned and marked have never belonged to it and therefore [we] cannot belong [to] it.'⁷⁰

The following year a similar letter was sent to the government with copies to the press restating their previous stands. However, the government gazette of the Kukuom-Ahafo State Council strengthened the position of the Kukuomhene against the Asante loyalists. He resolved to remove them one after the other from their stools, and by the middle of the year the position of all of them was badly beleaguered.⁷¹ In 1959 the Kukuomhene capitalized on his identification with the CPP and his status as the Omanhene of the new State Council to crackdown on the pro-Asante Adikrofo. He instigated the CPP youth of Hwidiem, Mim, Goaso, Noberkaw, Kwapong, Nkaseim, Kwaku Nyuma, Akrodie, Aweam, Asufutuo, Fawohoyeden, Gyedu, Mehame, Ntotroso, Pomaakrom and Sankore to destool their chiefs by preferring charges against them. In their place pro-CPP candidates were installed as chiefs regardless of their family background. For example at Mim and Goaso non-royals were installed as chiefs.⁷²

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, quotation adopted from Dunn and Robertson.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, quotation adopted from Dunn and Robertson.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁷² PRAAD, Sunyani, and RAO2/82: Gazette Notice: Amendments of Gazette N.50 Kukuom State Council 3rd June 1958; see also Dunn and Robertson *op. cit.*, pp. 248-259.

As if the destoolment was not enough, Ahafo State Council passed a resolution requesting the government to send some of the ex-Adikrofo who were recalcitrant to detention by invoking the Preventive Detention Act passed in 1958.⁷³ To this end, on 10th December, 1956 the Kukuomhene sent a list of names of the destooled pro-Asante Adikrofo to the government through the District Commissioner of Goaso. He explained that these 'constitutionally destooled chiefs in Kukuom State Council are very stubborn, they still style themselves as chiefs or still perform the function of chiefs in their respective towns.'⁷⁴ The State Council also recommended similar action for the most loud-mouth supporters of the dissident Adikrofo. Consequently, a list of names and addresses were dispatched to the Regional Commissioner.⁷⁵

As intimated earlier, in April 1959 the Brong Ahafo Region was created out of the Ashanti Region by the CPP government as a fulfillment of the promises it made to the Techimanhene, the Dormaahene and the Kukuom Odikro before 1956 elections for supporting the party. This was followed by the establishment of the Regional House of Chiefs for the newly created region. The status of Kukuomhene as Omanhene qualified him as a member of the Regional House of Chiefs. The Kukuomhene, Yaw Frimpong took advantage of his admission into the Regional House of Chiefs to rupture the last vestige of the Asante-Ahafo relations and consolidate the independence of his State Council.⁷⁶ He declared that Kukuom had been independent of Asante from time immemorial, so he refused to have any dealings with Kumasi administratively and traditionally.

It is clear from the foregoing expose that Yaw Frimpong, who was in 1944 installed as an Odikro (a small boy in the Akan chieftaincy hierar-

⁷³ Dunn and Robertson, op. cit., p.257.

⁷⁴ PRAAD, Sunyani, RAO2/86, from Nana Yaw Frimpong, President, Kukuom State Council, Kukuom to D.C, Goaso 10th December, 1959. The affected ex-Adikrofo were Kwadwo Baydu of Kwapong, Kwasi Basowa of Noberkaw, Kwaku Appiah of Mim, Kwaku Agyei of Ntotroso and Kwame Gyamfi of Mefame.

⁷⁵ Dunn and Robertson, op. cit., p. 257.

⁷⁶ A.F. Robertson, 'Histories and Political Opposition in Ahafo Ghana' in *Africa* vol. xliii no11973, p.46, see also John Arthur, *Brong Ahafo Outlook*, Brong Ahafo Publication, Sunyani, 1965, pp.19-25.

chy), had by 1959 succeeded in leading a small band of small boys (the Adikrofo and CPP youth who supported his cause), to collaborate with the Dormaahene and the Techimanhene (big boys) to use partisanship to fight for the autonomy of the Ahafo and the Brong from Asante. But the question is: how sustainable was this independence? Whereas the administrative independence had been successful; the traditional independence had been fraught with some difficulties, and had been a recipe for chieftaincy conflicts between the Asantehene/Asanteman council and the Kukuomhene, as well as the Asantehene and some of the prominent Brong chiefs like the Techimanhene, the Gyamanhene, the Dormaahene and the Attebubuhene over the question of allegiance. In any case, the paramountcy of Kukuomhene was transient. In 1966 the CPP government was overthrown in a coup d'état by the National Liberation Council Government (NLC). The NLC government passed Decree 112 which abrogated the Kukuom Ahafo State Council, and all the Ahafo Adikrofo who had fallen victim to the unconstitutional destoolment by the Kukuomhene and the CPP government were re-instated and restored to their allegiance to the Golden Stool. Accordingly, the Kukuomhene was demoted to his former status as an Odikro.⁷⁷

Conclusion

In sum, it is obvious that the interference of governments in traditional institutions has undoubtedly been responsible for the intractable chieftaincy, ethnic and land disputes that the country has been witnessing in the recent past. The genesis of the chieftaincy problems which ensued between the Kukuomhene and the Asantehene can be traced to the British colonial government's attempts to dismember Asante by granting autonomy to the Asunafo-Ahafo Paramountcy under the leadership of Kukuom. This is what encouraged the Kukuomhene, Yaw Frimpong, to claim that Kukuom had been independent of Asante since time immemorial, and to nurse the desire for freedom from Asanteman. This desire culminated in the formation of an intricate alliance with the Brong Kyempim and the CPP government for the creation of the Brong Ahafo Region. There is no gainsaying the fact that the involvement of the CPP

⁷⁷ Kwame Osei Kwarteng, 'A Political History of Mim: 1896-1966', a Long Essay submitted to History Department, UCC, Ghana, July, 1991, p. 53.

and the NLC governments in chieftaincy matters has been responsible for the chieftaincy problems between the Asantehene and some of the Brong Ahafo chiefs.

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Oral tradition

Information obtained from Ms Mary Owusu. She informed the writer that Mr. G.K. Owusu, 67 years, resident in Tanoso Kumasi in 2009 gave her this information.