

Ahafo: Big Men, Small Boys and the Politics of Regionalism in Ghana from 1896 -1986

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The nationalist 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 People's Party (CPP), Ghana Action Party, Togoland Congress, Muslim Association Party, Ghana National Party and the Northern People's Party worked to achieve self-governance or independence. Two of these political parties, whose activities and policies impinged on the fortunes of Ahafo were the Convention People's Party (CPP) and the National Liberation Movement (NLM), later the United Party (UP). This paper proposes to examine how Kukuom Odikro Yaw Frimpong, in conjunction with various chiefs and Ahafo youth, exploited the rigorous political rivalry between the CPP and the NLM to their advantage in order to secure the creation of the Brong Ahafo Region out of the Ashanti Region whilst ensuring the restoration of the Kukuom Ahafo State Council.

Ahafo in Historical Perspective

Brong Ahafo remained part of the Ashanti region from British colonisation in 1901 to the passing of the Region Act in 1959. Before the creation of the new region, both the Ahafo and Brong districts of Ghana did not only constitute part of Ashanti administratively, but also traditionally. The headmen (Adikrofo) and chiefs of these areas were also members of the Asante Confederacy, which had been restored in 1935 and later the Asanteman Council (established in 1935). Administratively, the Brong and Ahafo territories constituted one provincial administration –the Western Province of Ashanti– administered by a Provincial Commissioner at Sunyani, who was responsible to the Chief Commissioner in Kumasi. The various Bono states like Takyiman, Banda, Dormaa, Gyaman, Wenchi, had been incorporated into the Asante kingdom through wars of conquest. The Ahafo had been subjects of the various Kumasi Wing Chiefs. They came from different backgrounds such as Denkyira, Akyem and Asante, and were settled on the territory following the Asante conquest and annexation of Ahafo land from Aowin between 1720 and 1722.¹

After the conquest and annexation of Ahafo land in 1722, the Kumasi Wing Chiefs systematically established the various Ahafo communities over a number of years. Immediately following the Asante conquest and annexation Ahafo became an Asante dependency and was

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¹ K. O. 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: K. O. Kwarteng, 'The Asante Conquest of Ahafo in the 18th Century :A Historical Legacy', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New series 6 (2002), pp. 62–66.

administered directly from Kumasi. Arhin observes that Ahafo 'as a distinct district 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 thus became a member of the division of its Kumasi overlord.

Following the exile of Prempeh I to Seychelles Island in 1896, Ahafo became a British protectorate. This agreement was entrenched in the Treaty of Friendship and Protection, signed by Captain Davidson Houston and twelve Ahafo Adikrofo at Kukuom. As a British protectorate, Ahafo was provided with a traditional constitution which created three divisions. Kukuom Odikro became the Omanhene and head of one of the divisions, while the Adikrofo of Mim and Noberkaw were made heads of the Nifa (Right) and Benkum (Left) divisions respectively, with the rest of the Ahafo villages subordinated to them. As part of the arrangement, the British distinguished the Ahafo who lived down-stream of the Tano River from those who had settled up-stream. They referred to the former as the Asunafo-Ahafo and the latter as the Asutifi Ahafo. During the 1900-1901 Yaa Asantewaa war, the Omanhene of the Asunafo-Ahafo, Barimansu of Kukuom joined forces with the Asante warriors in an uprising against the British. Despite this, the British administration, after quelling the uprising, maintained the Asunafo-Ahafo paramountcy as a single chiefdom.³

Although the Treaty of Friendship and Protection elevated the status of Noberkaw and Mim in status for Odikro to Divisional Chiefs, Chief Beditor of Mim was reluctant to sign 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 were also unenthusiastic to serve the Mimhene as stipulated by the traditional constitution. The British colonial government was required to use force and intimidation in order to subject the two unwilling villages to the Mimhene.⁶

There was no sense of unity in the Asunafo-Ahafo paramountcy. In 1932 an intense conflict erupted between the Omanhene, Kwaku Mensah and the Noberkawhene, Kwabena Atta which had wide ramifications for Ahafo. The paramountcy was divided into two irreconcilable opposing factions, which engendered a constitutional crisis in the region. The problem was so acute that the Chief Commissioner of Ashanti, Newlands, was 'reluctantly compelled to regard the Ahafo people as being incapable of governing themselves'.⁷ Consequently, two cases in Ahafo were referred to the Kumasihene, Prempeh II for resolution: (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.⁸ On 31 January 1935, when the British colonial

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

³ K. Arhin, 'Aspects of Colonial District Administration: The case of North Western District of Ashanti 1904-1911', *Research Review*, 8, 1-3, (1971), p. 4.

⁴ W. Tordoff, *Ashanti Under the Prempeh, 1888-1936* (Oxford University Press, London, 1965), p. 138

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

⁶ Public Records and Archives Administration, Kumasi, ARG1/2 /21 Extract from Provincial Record Book, Western Province of Ashanti (WPA). See also: Tordoff, op cit, p164; K. O. Kwarteng, 'Extension of British Rule to Ahafo, 1896-1914', *Journal of Philosophy and Culture*, 11, 1 (January 2004), p. 145.

⁷ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG1/2/1/21 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, p. 83-91.

administration decided to restore the Asante Confederacy, it had to abrogate the Asunafo–Ahafo paramountcy and return all the Ahafo chiefs to their pre–1896 allegiances at Kumasi.

Despite the political tensions in Ahafo, the Chief Commissioner of Asante did not take a unilateral decision in abrogating the Asunafo Ahafo Paramountcy. 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 due to uncertainty regarding his future status, but in due course, he supported the proposal. His support was evident through his choice to visit and salute to the Akuroponhene, the former overlord of Kukuom under the Asante Kingdom when visiting Kumasi. Moreover, the Omanhene agreed that the Ahafo chiefs should again serve the Asantehene through their overlords in Kumasi after the restoration, but insisted that the British authorities allow him to maintain his Omanhene status.⁹ The Noberkawhene was hostile towards the Kukuomhene, Kwaku Mensah and played a leading role in his eventual destoolment. Despite this, he remained half-hearted 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.’¹⁰ In contrast, the Mimhene unreservedly welcomed the proposal, and together with most of the Ahafo Adikrofo supported the restoration of the Asante Confederacy with alacrity. This support grew from their frustration at being subordinate to Kukuom. The other Adikrofo supported the restoration of the confederacy as they believed it would relieve them from the perceived torment of rule by the divisional head of Kukuom, Noberkaw and Mim.

Ahafo under the Asante Confederacy

The expectations of the Ahafo Adikrofo were shattered under the confederacy as conditions were no better than they had been under the Asunafo–Ahafo Paramountcy. Having secured the right to once again exercise authority over the Ahafo, the various Kumasi overlords subjected the Ahafo to treatments which Kwarteng describes as ‘humiliating, exploitative, extortionate and intimidating.’¹¹ With the exception of the Odikro of Sankore, who received humane treatment from his overlord, the Atipinhene,¹² the rest were victimised and disrespected by their Kumasi overlords. This treatment is evident in the following examples:

- (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 to Kumasi, where they were kept waiting for several days and even weeks without being seen.¹³
- (ii) A chieftaincy dispute arose at Noberkaw and the elders were summoned to Kumasi by the Akyeamehene, who demanded that the elders install his favoured candidate, though

⁹ Tordoff, op cit, p. 118.

¹⁰ J. Dunn and A. F Robertson, *Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Ahafo* (Cambridge University Press, London, 1973), p. 245.

¹¹ Kwarteng, M.Phil Thesis, op cit, p. 121.

¹² PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: Report on the Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 30th June 1937.

¹³ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: Sinclair Assistant District Commissioner of Goaso’s report on Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 30th June 1937.

that candidate had previously been destooled by the elders for misappropriating stool funds.¹⁴

- (iii) Another succession dispute erupted at Kukuom when the kingmakers nominated, elected and presented a candidate to the Akuroponhene, but he rejected the kingmakers' choice, instead supporting the candidacy of Kwaku Mensa, the ex-Omanhene destooled in 1933. 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.¹⁵
- (iv) The Ahafo also suffered arbitrary arrests 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 and chose to destool 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 stool money and took away over £1000.¹⁶
- (v) The police and the messenger took away the stools and stool properties and threw them into the bush.¹⁷ 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 for destooling a chief without his approval and charged them £60 as bail fees.¹⁸ The Ntotroso people alleged they paid £30 for six lorries, which transported them from Ntotroso to Kumasi, paid £20 to the Bantamahene as *aseda*¹⁹ and £65 as bribe to the Kumasi chiefs. In all they spent £200 which they had to borrow from someone in Kumasi.²⁰ The Bantamahene denied some of the Ntotroso people's allegations as figments of their imagination. However, his confirmation of the mass arrest clearly indicates the Kumasi overlords' high-handed treatment of their Ahafo subjects.
- (vi) The Kumasi overlords also exploited the financial resources of Ahafo to enrich themselves to the neglect of the development of Ahafo communities. 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. However their methods of collection were tantamount to exploitation. Immediately following the restoration of the confederacy, the Kumasi chiefs re-asserted their ownership of the Ahafo lands and began to claim their entitlements.
- (vii) The Kumasi chiefs also assumed the responsibility of alienating Ahafo forest lands to strangers or land speculators. The Ahafo Adikrofo reverted to their previous role as caretakers and was thus unable to alienate land without the express permission or approval of the Kumasi landlords, nor could they sign leases without Kumasi participation.²¹ In 1937, for instance, the United Africa Company (UAC) and Cadbury Fry

¹⁴ Ibid., Report on the Ahafo for the Quarter ending 30th September 1937.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., Report on Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 31st December, 1937.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Thanksgiving.

²⁰ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: report on Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 31st December, 1937

²¹ Kwarteng, M.Phil op cit, p. 124.

obtained leases of building plots at Goaso at a rent of £5 and £3 per annum respectively.²²

- (vii) It would be expected that, due to the location of the plots, the Odikro of Goaso would oversee the transaction. Instead, 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. The three chiefs signed the lease of Cadbury Fry, but only the Akwaboahene and Mim Odikro signed the UAC lease.²³ Despite these leases Akwaboahene took all the profits leaving the two Ahafo Adikrofo with nothing.²⁴
- (viii) The rapacity of the Akwaboahene is especially evident in the exploitation of the Kubi Shrine of Ayomso. The Akwaboahene, the landlord of Ayomso stool lands, stationed a clerk at Ayomso to claim a third of the Kubi shrine's revenue, leaving Ayomsohene and the Shrine with the remaining profits.²⁵
- (viii) 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 (D.C.), who saw the whole scheme as not only unsatisfactory, but also as an attempt to deprive the Ahafo of revenue. Moreover, the D.C. reported the matter to the Asantehene who warned the Hiahene not to make any financial raids of the Ahafo.²⁶
- (ix) The financial deprivation of the Ahafo Adikrofo by the Kumasi chiefs is further illustrated 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 were unaware of how much they were due, and the clerks of the Asantehene's office capitalized on this ignorance and demanded a commission. 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'.²⁷ 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.²⁸

The exploitation of the Ahafo by the Kumasi chiefs reached its peak in late 1938, when both the Hiahene and the Akwaboahene requested the District Commissioner in Kumasi to permit them to inspect Ahafo farms and to conclude official agreements with the Adikrofo on

²² PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: report on Ahafo District by District Commissioner (D.C.) 21st February 1938.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Report on the Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 30th September 1937.

²⁶ *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.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Report on the Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 31st December, 1937.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Report on the Ahafo District for the Quarter ending 30th September, 1938.

the payment of tributes. However, both the Assistant District Commissioner of Goaso and the District Commissioner of Kumasi objected to such a move on the grounds that it was improper to allow individual chiefs from Kumasi to enter into agreements with the Adikrofo regarding tribute payment.²⁹ To tackle the problem once and for all, the District Commissioner recommended to the Chief Commissioner of Asante, to devise a scheme for the sharing of tributes that would be acceptable to all the stakeholders of Ahafo. In the estimation of the District Commissioner, this would be beneficial to all the parties and the government as well.³⁰

The suggestion of the D.C was accepted by the Chief Commissioner and thus, he contacted the Asantehene. After intensive consultations between the two, it was agreed that the Asantehene should work out a blue-print for the division of tributes from Ahafo.³¹ Subsequently, the Asantehene, on 25th October, 1939 invited the landlords of Ahafo, the Hiahene, the Akwaboahene, the Nyinahinhene, the Nkawie Paninhene and the Assuonwinhene to Manhyia Palace. With the assistance of some of his elders, he settled all the boundary disputes between the landlords of Ahafo and finally partitioned the Ahafo lands among them.³²

The Asantehene held another meeting with the Ahafo landlords on 11th November 1939 concerning the division of tribute from Ahafo. The agreement entrenched the division of tributes from settler farmers in Ahafo. The agreement was as follows: three ninths to the Golden Stool; four ninths to the landlords; and two ninths to the caretaker chiefs.³³

The Ahafo were dissatisfied with the arrangement, because, it did not serve their interest, but they did not dare to challenge this. 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 agreement instead served to facilitate it. From that time until 1958 the Kumasi chiefs alienated large portions of the Ahafo virgin forest to land speculators who established cocoa and oil-palm plantations. They also leased forest reserves to timber concessionaires to establish timber firms. These agreements earned the Kumasi Chiefs thousands of pounds which they used to construct large, multi-storey buildings in Kumasi. In 1958, the newly elected 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.³⁴

Despite the ill-treatment the Ahafo received from their Kumasi overlords, the Asantehene allowed Ahafo representation on the council of Kumasi State and on the Asante Confederacy Council. The Odikro of Mim, Kwaku Appiah, was made the Ahafo spokesman and representative on these councils.³⁵ But some of the Ahafo, particularly those who had Denkyira background, were unsatisfied with this and believed that the best solution to their plight was the restoration of the Kukuom paramountcy.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ PRAAD Kumasi, ARG1/2/157: Tribute in Ahafo–Collection–from the D.C. Kumasi to the Chief Commissioner, Asante, Kumasi, 15th December 1938.

³¹ PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 6/2/86: Report on Ahafo District for the Quarter ending June, 1939.

³² PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG 1/2/157: Ahafo Lands, from D. C. Kumasi to Chief Commissioner Asante, Kumasi, 14th December, 1939.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ A. Brempong, *Transformation in Traditional Rule in Ghana (1951–1996)* (Sedco, Accra, 2001), p. 37.

³⁵ Dunn and Robertson, op cit, p.246. See also: K. O. Kwarteng, *A Political History of Mim: 1896–1966*, BA Long Essay, Department of History, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, (1991), p. 45.

Kukuomhene, Yaw Frimpong: Party Politics, Regionalism and Paramountcy.

Those Ahafo who supported the restoration of the Kukuom paramountcy were buoyed 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.'³⁶ His immediate concern following accession was to reestablish the Kukuom paramountcy by mobilizing all the resources at his disposal within and beyond the district.³⁷ Between 1944 and 1948 his efforts were met with little success. However, the emergence of partisan politics in the Gold Coast and Asante gave impetus to his campaign. .

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 youth movements, won the 1951 election. Kwame Nkrumah was released from prison and offered the position of the Leader of Government Business.³⁸ In 1954, following two CPP policy decisions, namely, the re-demarcation and regional distribution of the electoral districts and cocoa politics, which the Asante youth in the CPP and the Asante chiefs found to be inimical to the Asante interest, the National Liberation Movement was formed.³⁹ The Asantehene supported the National Liberation Movement 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 unitary.⁴⁰

Initially the Kukuom Odikro Yaw Frimpong joined the NLM but later defected to the CPP on the grounds that the Mim Odikro, Kwaku Appiah, who was the Ahafo representative on the Asanteman Council, had taken advantage of his position to undermine Kukuom's bid to regain the paramountcy.⁴¹ The Mim Odikro's ambition was to fight for the re-establishment of the Ahafo state, with his appointment 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.⁴² Thus, the Kukuom Odikro realized that he would be fighting a losing battle if he continued to remain a member of the NLM.⁴³

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 nursed the ambition of seceding from the Asanteman Council.⁴⁴ Tradition relates that:

³⁶ Dunn and Robertson, op cit, p. 246.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ M. A. Seiwa, Owusu, *Prempeh II and the Making of Modern Asante* (Woeli, Accra, 2009), pp. 103- 105.

³⁹ Ibid. See also: A. A. Boahen, *Ghana: Evolution and change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, (Longman, London, 2000), pp. 182-183. National Liberation Movement was an Asante nationalist movement or party that championed the cause of Asante struggle against dictatorship of Kwame Nkrumah and the C.P.P. government prior to Ghana's independence.

⁴⁰ D. E. K. Amenumey, *Ghana: A Concise History from Pre-Colonial to the 20th Century* (Accra, Woeli, 2008), p. 213.

⁴¹ Dunn and Robertson, op cit, p. 246.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Kwarteng, M.Phil Thesis, p. 131.

⁴⁴ Dunn and Robertson, op cit, pp.246-7. See also S. Owusu, op cit, p.126; A. Brempong, op cit, p. 21.

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 Dormahene offended the sensibilities of the future Omanhene, Agyeman Badu who had accompanied his revered uncle to Manhyia.⁴⁵

For this reason, Agyeman Badu nurtured a grudge against the Asanteman, as soon as he acceded the Dormaa stool he 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 1952.⁴⁶ In order to win the CPP Government's recognition for the separation of the Brong territory from the Asanteman Council, the Dormaahene and Techimanhene realized that their best chance of success depended upon supporting the CPP government.⁴⁷

According to Arhin, in 1952, because the Asanteman Council had not openly allied itself with the opponents of the CPP, Nkrumah set up a committee chaired by Nene Azu Mate Korle, 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, Nkrumah made a common cause with the Brong chiefs, thus supporting their attempts to assert their independence from the Asanteman Council.⁴⁸ Having received the assurance of support from the CPP government, the Techimanhene led the Brong chiefs to renounce their membership of the Asanteman Council.⁴⁹

When Yaw Frimpong realized he shared parallel aspirations 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 the restoration of the Ahafo paramountcy.⁵⁰ 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, the Minister of Local Government, Kwame Nkrumah, the Ministerial Secretary to the Prime Minister, three Ministers and their permanent secretaries, as well as sixteen Members of Parliament (MPs), the Regional and District Administrative officers.⁵¹ The petition elucidated: (i) that the Ahafo agreed to join the Asante confederacy with the understanding that the Kukuomhene would retain his Omanhene status; (ii) that Ahafo was not given representation on the Asanteman Council and that the representation of the Mimhene, who was before 1935, the Nifahene of Ahafo and therefore a subject to the Omanhene of Ahafo; (iii) that the Ahafo derived no benefit from the work of the Asante Regional Development Committee;

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ A. Brempong, *op cit*, p. 21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁹ Dunn and Robertson, *op cit*, pp. 246–7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ PRAAD, Sunyani, RA02/83, from Nana Yaw Frimpong, Kukuomhene et al, Kukuom, to the Governor, Accra, 17th April 1956.

(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.⁵² The petition concluded that the Ahafo had been administered by Asante for a lengthy period and yet remained under-developed. This made a strong case to move the Brong administration, with the Kukuomhene being recognized as the Omanhene of Ahafo.⁵³

A critical examination of the signatories of the petition reveals that they were CPP members. Further, the petition did not represent the views and aspirations 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 only Kenyasi and Acherensua represented by non-elders. Subsequently, Kwarteng concluded that the petition represented the parochial interest of Kukuom Odikro Yaw Frimpong and not the Ahafo as a whole.⁵⁴

For unknown reasons the government did not respond to the petition and thus it was repeated by Yaw Frimpong. 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. This time the petition was successful and assurance of support was exchanged between the CPP leaders in Accra, the Brong chiefs and Yaw Frimpong. Upon the CPP's 1956 election victory, which led to Ghana's Independence, the party leaders began to honour the petition's demands.⁵⁵

The CPP government ensured an equal number of invitations were given to both the Asanteman Council and the Brong Kyempim movement for the Independence Day celebration on March 6th. In the following week, a new regulation gave the Techimanhene and Dormaahene the right to appeal to the Governor-General instead of the Asanteman Council in constitutional disputes.⁵⁶

The CPP government further supported the aforementioned petition with the initiation of a separation agreement. The 1957 Constitution (Order-in-Council), made provision for the creation of five regions, namely, Eastern (including present-day Greater Accra); Western (including present-day Central Region); Ashanti (including present-day Brong Ahafo); Northern (including present-day Upper East and Upper West); and Transvolta/ Togoland (the present-day Volta Region).⁵⁷ However, in October 1957, when announcing the posting of Regional Commissioners, Ashanti alone was assigned two Commissioners, meaning that Western Ashanti, which was occupied by the Brong and the Ahafo, was effectively elevated to the status of a separate region.⁵⁸ This separation was cemented in the 1959 Brong Ahafo Region Act⁵⁹ which entrenched the carving out of two thirds of the Ashanti territory to create the new region.⁶⁰

⁵² PRAAD, Sunyani, from RAO2/83, from Nana Yaw Frimpong, op cit, see also Dunn and Robertson, op cit, pp. 247–250.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Kwarteng, M.Phil thesis op cit, p. 132.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 133.

⁵⁶ S. Owusu, op cit, p. 126.

⁵⁷ A. Brempong, op cit, p.25. See S. Owusu, op cit, p. 133.

⁵⁸ S. Owusu, op cit, p. 134.

⁵⁹ A. Brempong, op cit, p. 37.

⁶⁰ S. Owusu, op cit, p. viii.

Meanwhile, in February 1958 the Ministry of Local Government officially recognized the Kukuomhene as a paramount chief.⁶¹ This restoration however, did not terminate the allegiance of the 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, thus ensuring the continued influence of the Kumasis in Ahafo. The Kukuomhene, therefore, realized 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 Chiefs to renounce any political bonds with Asante and to repudiate Kumasi demand for the allegiance of any Ahafo Odikro.⁶²

The immediate reaction of the majority of Ahafo Adikrofo who were members of the opposition United Party was to vehemently oppose the elevation of Kukuom to paramountcy. The Minister of Local Government, on 10th February 1958, informed the Kukuomhene and seven other chiefs in Ashanti who were restored to paramount status to swear an oath of allegiance to the Asantehene as a prerequisite for their recognition by the Government as Amanhene.⁶³

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.⁶⁴ This explanation appears to have satisfied the Local Government Minister, who almost immediately sanctioned the inauguration of the newly created Kukuom Ahafo State Council. This was attended by eight Ahafo Adikrofo, namely, Dantano, Wamahinso, Etweneto, Ayomso, Sienna, Kenyasi II and the Regent of Acherensua. The Kukuomhene was elected as 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 listing the fourteen members of the State Council in June 1958.⁶⁵

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 a 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 a lack of unity and political strength weakened their opposition to the Kukuomhene political aggrandizement.⁶⁶ As members of the opposition party, they were politically disadvantaged and 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.'⁶⁷ 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

⁶¹ Dunn and Robertson, op cit, p. 250.

⁶² Ibid., p. 252.

⁶³ PRAAD, Sunyani, RAO 2/83: from the Minister of Local Government, Accra to the Secretary to the Regional Commissioner, Kumasi, 10th February, 1958.

⁶⁴ Ibid. from the Government Agent, Kumasi to the Regional Commissioner, Kumasi, 2nd May 1958.

⁶⁵ Dunn and Robertson, op cit, p. 252.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 253.

⁶⁷ Ibid. quotation adopted from Dunn and Robertson.

stools belonged to the Kumasi State Council.⁶⁸ The letter was signed by twelve chiefs who pronounced 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.'⁶⁹

The following year a similar letter was sent to the government and the press restating their opposition. Despite this, 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 their positions were in weakened state.⁷⁰ In 1959 the Kukuomhene capitalized on his association 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, Asufufuo, Fawohoyeden, Gyedu, Mehame, Ntotroso, Pomaakrom and Sankore to destool their chiefs by bringing charges against them. In their place pro-CPP candidates were installed regardless of their family background. For example at Mim and Goaso non-royals were installed as chiefs.⁷¹

In addition to the dramatic destoolment, the 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 1958.⁷² To this end, on 10th December, 1958 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.'⁷³ The State Council also recommended similar action for the most vocal supporters of the dissident Adikrofo. Consequently, a list of names and addresses were dispatched to the Regional Commissioner.⁷⁴

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 the 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.⁷⁵ He declared that Kukuom had been independent of Asante from time immemorial and refused to have any dealings with Kumasi administratively and traditionally.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., quotation adopted from Dunn and Robertson.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 253.

⁷¹ PRAAD, Sunyani, and RA02/82: Gazette Notice: Amendments of Gazette N.50 Kukuom State Council 3rd June 1958, see also Dunn and Robertson op cit, pp. 248 -259.

⁷² Dunn and Robertson op cit, p. 257.

⁷³ PRAAD, Sunyani, RA02/86, 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 Mehame .

⁷⁴ Dunn and Robertson op cit, p. 257.

⁷⁵ A.F. Robertson, 'Histories and Political Opposition in Ahafo Ghana', *Africa*, xliii, (1973), p. 46. See also, J. Arthur, *Brong Ahafo Outlook*, (Brong Ahafo Publication, Sunyani, 1965), pp. 19-25.

It is clear that Yaw Frimpong, who was in 1944 installed as an Odikro (a small boy in the Akan chieftaincy hierarchy), had by 1959 succeeded in leading a 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 in the fight for Ahafo and Brong autonomy from Asante. But the question is: how sustainable was this independence? Whereas the administrative independence had been successful; the traditional independence was fraught with difficulties, and had created chieftaincy conflicts between the Asantehene/Asanteman council and the Kukuomhene, as well as between 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 were re-instated and their allegiance to the Golden Stool was restored. Accordingly, the Kukuomhene was demoted to his former status as an Odikro.⁷⁶

Conclusion

In sum, interference of governments in traditional institutions was undoubtedly responsible for the intractable chieftaincy, ethnic and land disputes that the country experienced. 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 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 helped to nurse the desire for freedom from Asanteman. This desire culminated in the formation of intricate alliance with the Brong Kyempim and the CPP government for the creation of the Brong Ahafo Region. There is no denying the fact that the involvement of the CPP and the NLC governments in chieftaincy matters was responsible for the chieftaincy tension between the Asantehene and some of the Brong Ahafo chiefs.

⁷⁶ Kwame Osei Kwarteng, 'A political History of Mim:1896-1966', a Long Essay submitted to History Department, UCC, Ghana, July, 1991, p53.

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Oral Tradition:

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