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“Hewers of Wood, Carriers of Water”: Islam, Class, and Politics on the Eve of Ghana's Independence

Jean Marie Allman

The publication of Michael Crowder's "Whose Dream Was It Anyway?" in January 1987 marked the opening of what promises to be a challenging era of revision and re-evaluation in African historiography.¹ With the benefit of three decades of historical hindsight and armed with recently declassified colonial documentation, historians are beginning to grapple with the complexities of national struggle in late colonial society, beginning with Ghana's march to freedom in 1957. It is as a part of this process of revision and re-evaluation that the following examination of the Muslim Association Party [MAP] of the Gold Coast is offered.² The MAP was a comparatively small organization which was and is easily overshadowed by the turbulence of mass nationalist politics in the years 1950 thru 1957. Yet its unique blend of religious, class, and ethnic appeals—appeals too often misunderstood or dismissed outright as vestiges of tribalism, traditionalism, or religious fanaticism—reveals much about the antinomies of nationalist struggle in the Gold Coast.

Political scientists concerned with the dynamic rise of Gold Coast nationalism in the decade after World War II (and those few historians who dared venture into the recent past) focused primarily on Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party [CPP], its early split from the United Gold Coast Convention [UGCC] and its ultimate domination of nationalist politics from 1951 to 1957 (Apter, 1955; Austin, 1964; Bourret, 1960; Bretton, 1966; Fitch and Oppenheimer, 1968). Understandably drawn to the dynamism and historical destiny of the CPP, contemporary scholars chose to focus attention on the party which was to lead Ghana to independence, thus treating the myriad of opposition groups in an auxiliary or secondary way as brief obstacles on the CPP's preordained march to power. In many sources, the Muslim Association Party, founded in 1953, is totally overlooked. In others, it appears briefly as a feeble, short-lived attempt on the part of Gold Coast Muslims to combine religion and politics—a definite taboo in the eyes of the CPP and many of its contemporary chroniclers.

Yet there is much about the MAP that warrants a second look. According to J. H. Price, the only contemporary chronicler to analyze in depth the politicization of Muslims in the 1950s, the estimated

number of Muslims in 1954 (excluding members of the Ahmadiyya Order) was between 500,000 and 700,000—ten to fifteen percent of the total population of the Gold Coast.³ Although Price's figures were extrapolated from the 1948 Census—a census which contained many inaccuracies due to omissions of entire villages and deliberate falsifications—they nevertheless suggest that Muslims were not an insignificant minority in the 1950s. Indeed, in many areas of the north and in the stranger communities of the southern urban areas, Muslims far outnumbered non-Muslims in specific voting wards.⁴

Yet the fact that the MAP had a potentially large base of support is not as crucial as the fact that it constituted the first nationwide opposition to Nkrumah's CPP to emerge from outside of the established nationalist UGCC network—that is, the UGCC, the CPP, the Ghana Congress Party, the Ghana Nationalist Party and a host of other spin-off organizations. The MAP preceded the founding of both the Northern People's Party [NPP] and the Asante National Liberation Movement [NLM], the two organizations which scholars and activists alike would designate as the opposition to the CPP after 1954. Yet both the NLM and the NPP relied heavily on the example of the MAP. Its appeals, its propaganda, and its tactics (the MAP enjoyed the notorious reputation of being the first political organization to use vigilante groups to further its cause) were often adopted by subsequent opposition groups. Moreover, many leading figures in the MAP went on, after the party was eclipsed by the broader opposition to Nkrumah, to assume major roles within the NLM, the NPP and, after independence, the United Party [UP], that fleeting and largely unsuccessful attempt to weld together a united opposition to Nkrumah in 1958.

Demography and political precedents aside, the MAP warrants deeper investigation if only because it stood as a unique experiment in Gold Coast politics. A specifically Muslim organization in a society where Muslims form a distinct minority, the MAP sought to mobilize mass support for political and civil action in the name of Allah. Islam was the bond which brought together a variety of peoples from a host of different backgrounds toward the attainment of specific educational goals and of somewhat more enigmatic social and political goals. Moreover, because many Muslims, particularly in the Gold Coast's southern regions, were migrant laborers, "the hewers of wood and carriers of waters" (Price, 1954: 107), not to mention the pickers of cocoa and the miners of gold, the MAP's appeals often revealed an embryonic class consciousness. They represented an effort on the part of at least some of the party's leadership to mobilize Muslims on the basis of shared economic exploitation. That Muslims were organizing against the CPP along perceived class lines should alone warrant a re-evaluation not only of the effectiveness of Nkrumah's mass nationalist appeals in the years before independence, but of the very nature of his supposedly divisive and sectarian opposition.

In the examination of the MAP which follows, particular emphasis is placed on the Asante Region, for it was this area—far

from CPP strongholds along the coast—which saw the most intensive and successful organizing efforts by the party. It is in Asante that the structure of the stranger community which gave birth to the MAP—the bonds which united it and the divisions which riddled it—is best documented by written and oral sources. It was in Asante that the MAP fought its fiercest battles, both on the streets and through the ballot boxes, and that its unique combination of class-based and religious appeals (and the contradictions inherent in those appeals) comes into sharpest relief. And it was here that the leadership of the MAP confronted directly their social and political impotence as a minority, as strangers in a strange land.

Life in the Zongo: The Terrain for Mobilization

Despite Islam's longer and more sustained influence on the Gold Coast's Northern Territories, the north would not give birth to the Muslim Association Party. The MAP would be a distinctly southern, urban phenomenon, rooted in the stranger communities or zongos of cities like Accra and Kumase. Though Muslims from the north maintained a presence in the south, particularly in Asante, for well over two centuries (Wilks, 1966 and 1975; Schildkrout, 1979), it was not until after the British gained a firm footing in Asante at the turn of the century that the term *zongo* (Hausa for "camping place of a caravan") was brought into common usage and that the stranger communities of the southern cities began to be legally organized and defined by the British colonial authorities.

The zongo of Kumase was established by colonial statute in 1904 when the British designated a "Mohammedan quarter" of Kumasi. During the early years, the main settlers in the zongo were soldiers recruited from the north, from areas such as Hausaland and Mossi, who had helped the British defeat Asante during the Yaa Asantewa War of 1900. Also among the first migrants were traders—Hausa, Fulani, Mossi, Wangara, and Dagomba—who came from centralized states long influenced by Islam (Schildkrout, 1970: 256-7). While migration from these areas to the urban centers of the south continued through the 1950s, the spread and intensification of mining activities and cocoa farming led other groups from northern areas (from both within and outside of the present borders of Ghana) to migrate to the south for work. Unlike the earlier settlers, these people came not as soldiers or as traders, but as laborers and were often from noncentralized (often non-Muslim) communities such as Kusasi, Frafra, and Grunshi.

Over time, the internal organization of the zongo came to reflect the disparate backgrounds of this migrant community. Each ethnic group was led by a headman and maintained an informal political network. Historically, the Hausa headman (Serikin Hausa) was considered the central figure of authority in the zongo. This authority was legally sanctioned in 1927 by the British who declared the Hausa

headman to be Serikin Zongo—chief of the zongo. Though this position was abolished in 1932 (only to be reinstated by the CPP in 1958), the Hausa headman was still considered the leader of the zongo community by colonial officials, by the Asantehene and, to a lesser extent, by non-Hausas in the zongo (Ashanti Regional Office Files [AROF], 1949).⁵

The position of the zongo community with regard to the traditional structures of power in Asante has always been one of patronage and protection. Zongo residents were and are strangers (even if they have lived in the area for three generations) who must “pay allegiance to the Asantehene [King of Asante] as the ‘owner of the land’ and conscientiously greet him in a formal procession on festival occasions.” Indeed, in the 1950s, when rumors spread that the CPP was going to attack the palace of the Asantehene, this allegiance was displayed dramatically. The Serikin Zongo, Ahmadu Baba, sent a zongo force to guard the Asantehene's palace 24-hours a day for three months (Schildkrout, 1970: 256; 1978: 208).

Historically, the official functionary who has mediated between the strangers of the zongo and the Asantehene has been the Asante Nkramo Imam—head of the Asante Muslims. Quite distinct from the Muslims of the zongo, Asante Muslims come from those areas of the north conquered or annexed by Asante in the mid-18th century. They are not considered strangers and are under the direct authority of the Asantehene, via the Imam who, since the 1840s, has been considered a member of the *nsumankwaifo* or Court Physicians (Wilks, 1975: 81, 250, 278). The distinction between the Asante Nkramo (Muslims) and the zongo Muslims has been more than an ethnic and chronological division, however. In the 1950s, a fierce political rivalry emerged as the Asante Nkramo remained ardent supporters of the CPP while their Muslim brothers in the zongo formed the rival MAP.⁶

While Islam has not tended to bridge the gap, historically, between zongo residents and the Asante Nkramo, it has constituted a powerful homogenizing force within the zongo itself. In a stranger community consisting of a variety of ethnic groups and social classes, Islam has been the primary force for integration and unification. While many migrants to the south came as Muslims, others, particularly the more recent ones, converted to Islam upon settling in the zongo. For these migrants, from areas such as Talensi, Kusasi, and Dagati, conversion to Islam facilitated integration into the wider zongo community. This process of incorporation via Islam has thus helped forge a distinct zongo community. At the same time, it has reinforced the division between the strangers and their hosts. Asante Nkramo learned to speak Twi and became an integral part of Asante culture and society. The growth of the zongo community, however, and the role of Islam as the primary force of sociocultural integration within that community have increased the polarization (both social

and cultural) between stranger and host (Schildkrout, 1974: 124-5; 1978: 90).

Yet Islam is not the only factor which has served to maintain the separation or distance between the zongo community and the host society. Of equal importance has been the economic factor. While the Asante Nkramo of the 18th and 19th centuries came as traders and clerics, the recent migrants to the urban areas of the south have come as unskilled laborers for the mines and cocoa farms and as petty traders. They are "the hewers of wood, the carriers of water"—an economically depressed and exploited class. There are obviously underprivileged elements within the larger host society and important exceptions to Price's characterization within the zongo itself—most notably among the leading headmen of the community. However, the general portrayal of the economic or class position of zongo residents is not an exaggeration and must be considered as a primary factor in reinforcing the polarization between the zongo and the rest of society. Indeed, it is only within the context of economic deprivation—coupled with the otherness of being both foreign and Muslim in culturally isolated communities—that life in the zongo and the politics of the Muslim Association Party can be understood.

The Rise of the MAP: Mobilizing the "Downtrodden"

The roots of the Muslim Association Party reach back to 1932 and the formation of the Muslim Association, an educational and social organization founded in Accra. For the first seven years of its existence, the Muslim Association was expressly apolitical. However, in 1939, it took a political stance by supporting the Mambii Party in the Accra municipal elections. According to Price, this move into the political arena was based on the fact that "Muslims felt there had been an unfair distribution of building materials following the damage caused by a severe earthquake in Accra earlier that year" (1954: 107-8). In the subsequent municipal election of 1942, the Muslim Association fielded a candidate of its own, Bankole Awooner-Renner. A non-Muslim, Awooner-Renner had turned to the Muslim Association after the dissolution of the radical, anti-imperialist West African Youth League.⁷ Successful in his candidacy, Awooner-Renner declared that he had cast his lot with the Muslim Association because he had felt the need to lead "the down-trodden, unrepresented and unrepresentable" (Asante, 1977: 208-9).

As the politicization of Gold Coast Muslims continued apace in the years during and after World War II, Awooner-Renner would play a key role in shaping the appeals and tactics and in directing the course of his constituency. Denounced by George Padmore as a "prominent ideologist of Crypto-Communism" (Marable, 1987: 115) and described by one biographer as "an unrepentant socialist" (Asante, 1977), Awooner-Renner had a long and dynamic political career before he turned to the Muslim Association. After attending Tuskegee

Institute in Alabama, he published extensively during the 1920s in the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Crisis*, then edited by W. E. B. DuBois. The first president of the Pan-African Council of the West African Youth League, he openly declared himself a Bolshevik before the beginning of World War II (Asante, 1977). Based on his concern for the "down-trodden and unrepresented"—a concern which ignited a dynamic international career in socialist and pan-African movements—Awooner-Renner would play a leading role in mobilizing Muslims of the south on the basis of shared economic exploitation.

However, as the Gold Coast entered the postwar years of intense nationalist agitation, the specific grievances of Muslims were eclipsed by, or perhaps found expression through, the broader struggle for independence. In 1948 the Muslim Association declared its support for the newly formed UGCC. When Nkrumah led the mass break from the UGCC and formed the CPP, the Muslim Association, inspired by Awooner-Renner, threw its support behind Nkrumah. Indeed, Awooner-Renner, in those early days of mass nationalist mobilization, was one of the principal leaders of the CPP. His ties with Nkrumah dated back to postwar England and the Fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945. He had played a key role in convincing Nkrumah to set up the West African National Secretariat in order, as Nkrumah wrote, "to put into action the new Pan African nationalism" (1957: 55). Thus, not surprisingly, Awooner-Renner was among the party leaders arrested during the days of Positive Action in Accra (January, 1950) and sentenced to prison.

In January 1951 the MAP agreed to give its full support to the CPP in the upcoming general election.⁸ "This support," writes Price,

was, in part, at least, due to the promise in para. 27 of the CPP election manifesto (1950) that 'Under self-government, taxes would still be levied on all who should pay taxes, but the CPP would see that taxation brings with it social, educational, medical, cultural and economic rewards for the whole community,' which was help to cover the provision of Muslim schools, where Arabic and the scriptures would be taught in addition to the normal curriculum (1954: 108).

Access to proper Koranic instruction was a primary goal of Muslims in the zongo communities of Accra and Kumase and had been an enduring weapon of mobilization for the Muslim Association. In light of the social fabric of the zongo, it was entirely understandable. The community was forged by Islam. Government and mission schools were perceived by parents as attempting to induce their children to abandon Islam. Further, as the zongo communities of southern Ghana were and are so isolated from the centers and strongholds of Islamic scholarship, education was seen as the only means of maintaining the purity of the faith and, thereby, the cohesion of the community.

The results of the 1951 election saw the CPP sweeping the polls, securing 34 of the 38 contested seats, despite the fact that the party's leadership—including Nkrumah and Awooner-Renner—still sat in prison as a result of the Positive Action campaign. The colonial governor, Charles Arden-Clarke, was forced to release the leadership from prison and shortly thereafter the CPP agreed to form the new government. Awooner-Renner, himself, was not pleased with the party's decision to work with the governor and confided to Basil Davidson that he believed the "initiative had passed 'from the hands of the oppressed to the hands of the oppressor'" (1973: 127). Yet most in the Muslim Association did not share Awooner-Renner's frustrations and, instead, with high expectations, looked forward to the fulfillment of promises made to the community during the election campaign.

Yet it was not long before the broader leadership of the association began to question its support for Nkrumah; promised educational reforms were not forthcoming. It appeared as though the educational grievances of the MAP's constituents (not to mention the general economic and political grievances of Awooner-Renner's "down-trodden and unrepresented") were not on the immediate agenda of the new CPP government. Soon the Muslim Association began to look elsewhere for political alliances, even flirting briefly with the Ghana Congress Party early in 1953 (Price, 1956: 23). However, the final break with the CPP did not come for several months. In mid-August the Muslim Association announced its intention to contest in all future elections—both municipal and national—campaigning in its own right as a political party. It sent a letter to the CPP Central Committee asking for a reciprocal arrangement whereby the Muslim Association would support CPP candidates in the upcoming Accra municipal elections in exchange for CPP support for seven Muslim Association candidates. The CPP rejected this request several days later and the Muslim Association announced its intention to withdraw all support from the CPP.

In Asante the *Pioneer* heralded the political awakening of Muslims in Accra, declaring that:

the announcement should leave no one in any doubt that the Muslims have been forced to withdraw [from the CPP] because the CPP has failed to fulfill any of the many election promises it made to them in 1950 . . . that the Muslims have no motive other than the practical achievement of their secular welfare (22 August 1953).

A few days later, the *Pioneer* reported that a meeting of the Central Committee of the CPP ended with a recommendation for the suspension of Awooner-Renner "for his 'subversive activities' toward the Party in meddling with the Muslim Association" (26 August 1953). Symbolically, it was at this critical time that Awooner-Renner began to be known as "Mustafa"—an appellation which underscored his

recent conversion to Islam, his devotion to the Muslim Association and his concern for the “down-trodden and unrepresented.” Perhaps just as significantly, it marked his permanent break with the CPP.

With less than six weeks' preparation to oppose the CPP in the Accra election, the Muslim Association did surprisingly well. This was in part due to a recent change in voting requirements which allowed resident aliens to vote in local elections.⁹ Winning two of the six seats it contested, the Muslim Association attracted nearly one-seventh of the vote. While the extension of the vote to resident aliens worked to the advantage of the Muslim Association, of primary importance were the efficient mobilization capabilities the association displayed in the weeks before the election. As Price remarks, the organization of the Muslim Association was “comparable on a smaller scale with that of the giant CPP machine” (1956: 24). He adds that many of the association's opponents pointed to Awooner-Renner as the man who was directly responsible for this efficiency, having spent several years in Britain studying law and fellow-travelling with the Communist party, learning there “the art of political organization.”

But by 1953 Muslim political mobilization around specifically Muslim issues would not be limited to Accra alone. The announcement in Accra in late August that the Muslim Association would begin to contest elections was coordinated with Muslim Association intentions to contest in the municipal election in Kumase in February 1954. This coordination of political efforts between Muslims in Accra and Kumase was the transforming factor; the Muslim Association would now become the Muslim Association Party, affirming the intentions of the Association to become an autonomous force in the political arena. As early as 23 August, the leaders of the Kumase Zongo—the headmen, the Serikin Zongo, and the imams—met and issued a pledge of support for the aims of the MAP and discussed plans for a “concerted action in connection with the putting up of Muslim candidates during the forthcoming elections.” The *Pioneer* sympathetically reported that the leaders had “come out to claim their economic, social and political rights as any other section of the citizens of the Gold Coast” (24 and 29 August 1953).

Less than two weeks later, Mallam Alfa Lardan, head of the Zongo Volunteers, the community's unofficial policing force, addressed a gathering of some 2000 in Kumase's zongo.¹⁰ He charged that the government had consistently discriminated against the zongo communities and that Muslims were regarded as “backward.” He insisted that the government had cause to view Muslims in that way because they “had not cared to fight for their rights.” Now was the time to fight, Lardan urged, and the weapons in the struggle “would be the Koran, unity [and] propaganda” (*Pioneer*, 2 September 1953). Lardan's galvanizing speech was a portent of things to come. It would be the Kumase zongo, rather than Accra, that would become the locus of political activity after the election in Accra, as zongo Muslims flocked to the MAP with what Price describes as “Mahdist fervor”

(1956: 20). With the Kumase municipal elections approaching in February and a general election scheduled for June, Muslims from most of the zongo communities of Asante, but particularly in Kumase, took up the MAP's mobilization cry: "Islam! Islam!"

One of the obvious reasons for the MAP's rapid success in Asante was the support given it by the generally conservative leadership of the zongo. The Serikin Zongo (Ahmadu Baba), the Imam al-jum'a (Mohamed Chiromah), the head of the Zongo Volunteers (Alfa Lardan), as well as the zongo headmen of the Yoruba, Wangara, Mossi, Fulani, Zabrama, Gonja, Kotokoli, Gawo, Busanga, Grunshi and Dagomba, were all active members of the MAP by October 1953 and were able to use their positions of power, influence, and patronage to mobilize support for the MAP within the zongo community. Moreover, that the MAP was sympathetically received by anti-CPP, non-Muslim Asantes meant that the Party was operating in an environment hospitable to mobilization (as compared to the generally hostile environment of Accra, a CPP stronghold). Indeed, the *Asante Pioneer*, after lamenting the CPP's overall victory in the Accra election, pointed to the MAP as an inspiration for Asantes:

it was not a defeat without hope, it is no cause for despair. The Muslims with their last minute effort have been able to defeat two of their CPP rivals. They have proved that in solidarity and determination they were undoubtedly superior to the [Ghana] Congress Party. That is a lesson well worth noting (17 September 1953).

In the end, it was a lesson and an inspiration that many anti-CPP Asantes took to heart as they began to prepare, in the ensuing months, to oppose the CPP on their own terms.¹¹

It was the pace at which the MAP mobilized in Asante and the sympathetic reception it received from non-Muslims in that region which undoubtedly contributed to the leadership's decision to hold the party's first political conference in Kumase on 3 October 1953. The purposes of the conference were to consolidate the movement, revamp its organization, and set out its objectives—all in preparation for the upcoming elections in February and June. One of the meeting's first accomplishments was the establishment of three committees to "fight for the rights of Muslims"—a political-educational body, a cultural body and an economic body. In addition, a youth organization, intended to counter the CPP-inspired Muslim Youth Association, and a women's organization were formed (*Pioneer*, 15 and 28 October 1953). "To struggle for [Muslim] civil rights," Awooner-Renner explained, was the paramount concern of these affiliate organizations. "Let nothing on earth shake your faith," he told the conference, "Come together. I believe that when Islam takes anything, it shall not fail. We shall not fail. We will march with the times no matter what obstacles beset us" (*Pioneer*, 5 and 16 October 1953).

Yet, some of those obstacles were formidable and the leadership of the MAP recognized early on that it faced more than the usual set of

deterrents in its efforts at mobilization and organization. Unlike members of other political parties which were to emerge in opposition to the CPP, many members of the MAP were deportable as aliens. The threat of deportation always loomed on the horizon and, because many of the zongo headmen active in the party were of foreign origin, it was a threat taken quite seriously. Although Nkrumah denied in October that he would deport Nigerian Muslims, his Secretary to the Ministry of Communications and Works announced at a CPP rally in late September that, if the MAP continued to mix politics and religion, "the government would be forced under certain obligations to deport Amadu Baba [Serikin Zongo] and his henchmen from Nigeria, their hometown" (*Pioneer*, 7 October 1953). In response to this threat of deportation and "in protest against any unjust laws which may be enacted to suppress Muslim aspirations in this country" (*Pioneer*, 5 October 1953), the MAP called on every Muslim to fast for three days, beginning the first of November. Though no MAP leaders were deported at this time, the threat was a real one. One of the first acts of the post-independence CPP government was to deport both Ahmadu Baba and Alfa Lardan.

Yet obstacles to the MAP's success were not limited to external factors, to threats from the powers-that-be. Within the zongo community itself, pockets of resistance to the MAP remained and in subsequent months violence flared between Muslims who remained faithful to the CPP and those who had opted to join the MAP. In the last months of 1953, this violence peaked in the controversy over the building of the mosque in Kumase. Malam Mutawakilu, head of the pro-CPP Muslim Youth Association and former rival of Ahmadu Baba for the office of Serikin Hausa, accused Baba of embezzling money from the mosque's building fund. Baba was eventually found innocent of the charges by a Kumase court. However, rather than put an end to the violence which had torn the community for months, Baba's acquittal spawned an outburst of guerrilla fighting between the Muslim Youth Association and the MAP over control of the mosque (Schildkrout, 1974: 126-7). It was a war that would continue to plague the zongo community until well after independence.

Yet it was the MAP, led by Ahmadu Baba and Hausa Imam Chiromah, that presided over the breaking of the soil for construction of the Kumase mosque on 10 January 1954. It was the MAP that dedicated its first propaganda van at the site of the mosque two weeks later. Both events affirmed the power and hegemony of the MAP within the zongo community and the importance of the mosque as the spiritual embodiment of that community. In less than five months, representatives of the MAP were to be found in nearly every position of authority inside the zongo, from Ahmadu Baba and Imam Chiromah to all 21 headmen who announced to their countrymen that all Muslims should turn in their CPP cards (*Pioneer*, 13 October 1953). For the moment, anyway, it appeared that the obstacles confronted by the party's leadership were not so formidable after all. The

momentum with which the MAP took control of the Asante zongos and the power it displayed there lent both weight and substance to one MAP spokesman's words in December 1953:

If the CPP brings roughness, we will teach them how to be rougher, if they bring hooliganism we are masters in that score. If they act as gentlemen, we, the Muslims, will show them they cannot get better gentlemen than us In the Name of Islam, [we] now declare war on Nkrumah's CPP [We will] fight them until there is no persecution and religion is for Allah (*Pioneer*, 3 December 1953).

And the results of the February Municipal Council election in Kumase revealed that the MAP was posing no idle threat to the CPP. Out of a total of 24 seats, the MAP contested 6 and won 4. Of the total votes cast, one-sixth went to the MAP.¹² Without a doubt, the results of the election greatly boosted the confidence of the MAP leadership. At the victory banquet in Kumase, Alfa Lardan summed up the party's assessment of the election results and its hopes for the future: "the Zongo CPP . . . is now dead, for it was evident that they could not cope with their fellow Muslims. The Muslim Party's recent victory was but a prelude to greater things to come" (*Pioneer*, 10 February 1954).

Dashed Hopes: The 1954 General Election and the Defeat of the MAP

That greater things did not come—the MAP failed miserably in the June general election—provided a rude awakening for those who had so joyously and optimistically celebrated February's victory. Despite a wide range of political appeals, strategic alliances with other opposition groups within the Gold Coast, letters of encouragement from Muslims leaders, such as Alhaji Ibrahim Kawlak, from outside the Gold Coast,¹³ and a mobilization drive which reached nearly every corner of the country, the MAP was only able to contest 15 of the 104 Legislative Assembly seats. Of those 15, the party captured only 1 and attracted less than three percent of the overall vote (Austin, 1964: 236, 243). The one seat gained by the party was not in a traditional MAP stronghold—one of the southern zongo communities—but in the Gulkpego-Nanton constituency of the Northern Territories. It was a resounding defeat that revealed more than anything the inherent limitations of the party.

The MAP leadership had made every effort to broaden its appeals prior to the election. One of the primary demands raised in the general election platform was for the preservation of chieftancy in the Gold Coast—a demand which clearly reflected the interests of the leadership of the party, particularly in Kumase. As one spokesman declared, the role of chiefs and elders within the MAP was paramount: "You the youth are the soldiers. We the elders are the

powder, the bullets and the machine guns”—a powerful image in light of the political violence which shook the cities and towns of the south in the months before the election (*Pioneer*, 23 September 1953). More importantly, however, the appeal to the sanctity of chieftancy was aimed at striking a responsive chord in the broader community. The MAP was formed, according to another spokesman, “because we do not want the Chiefs to ‘run away and leave their sandals behind,’ but to ride on horses and in palanquins” (*Pioneer*, 5 October 1953). The appeal to the dignity of traditional authority was consistently repeated throughout the election campaign and constituted a major portion of the MAP election manifesto published in April. The MAP vowed that “chieftancy shall be restored to its ancient dignity” (1954: 3). Indeed, editorials appearing in the *Pioneer* (especially 20 April 1954) suggest that the MAP’s plea for the preservation of chieftancy fell on sympathetic ears within the broader Asante community.

The MAP issued other general appeals aimed at the wider population—appeals encouraging all anti-CPP forces to unite to “throw off that Black Imperialism” of Nkrumah and his government—and pulled no punches in attacking the CPP as “liars who would do nothing good if sent back to the Assembly [as] they were out to destroy the glorious heritage of the country” (*Pioneer*, 27 April 1954). The election manifesto exhorted, “Compatriots, tireless disciples of the new dawn, do not allow yourselves to be duped again” (MAP, 1954: 7).

Yet most of the issues raised by the MAP were not as general as those which advocated chieftancy or berated the politics of the governing party. Most of the party’s appeals were aimed at Muslims (specifically, zongo Muslims) and revolved around the issues of Islamic education and the representation of Muslims on all government bodies. As early as November 1953, the MAP had revealed the significance of education as a political issue when it formed a National Education Board to put “the various Arabic schools in the country on a better footing” and to convince the government to place Muslims on its education boards (*Pioneer*, 5 November 1953). As Abdul Rahim Alawa, a former MAP representative to the Kumase Municipal Council, recently recalled, the issue of equal access to educational facilities was a central issue for the party:

The CPP. . . built big schools for the Christians, modern schools for them. But the Muslims did not get that privilege. There [was] no secondary school for Muslims built by the government. There [was] no help in our educational system We wanted to just say, ‘If you are going to build a Christian secondary school, we must have one, too’ (Allman, 1984: FN/26/1).

The general feeling in the Muslim community, according to Price, was “that for true equality of provision, the state should run Koranic schools as well as . . . western-patterned schools” (1956: 19). In the MAP’s election manifesto, educational provisioning held a prominent position, with the party vowing to open Arabic Training Centers

throughout the country for anyone interested in learning the Arabic language.

Hand in hand with educational opportunity came the issue of representation of Muslims in all levels of government. In early November 1953, the Executive of the MAP sent a resolution to Nkrumah announcing that "the time had come for the Government to have Muslim representatives on all Statutory Boards, Committees and Bodies on Educational Policy" (*Pioneer*, 9 November 1953). No response to the resolution was forthcoming and representation of Muslims in government remained a burning issue throughout the pre-election campaign. "The policy of the Association," Awooner-Renner boldly declared,

was to ensure Muslim representation in the struggle for Ghana's liberation; to cooperate in and contribute equally to the attainment of complete Self-Government . . . [and] to fight for and protect true freedom of speech, religion and thought and to ensure civil liberty for all (*Pioneer*, 18 November 1953).

While the issues put forth by the MAP in the months before the general election were not entirely sectarian (indeed, even education and equal representation for Muslims were presented as broader issues which stemmed from a fundamental concern for civil rights), in the context of political rallies and fund-raisers, they were often presented and justified in the name of the faith. Despite consistent assertions that the MAP "was not for Muslims alone," Islam remained essential to the organization and mobilization of the movement. No two people were more aware of that than Abdul Rahim Alawa and Alfa Lardan, two of the party's founders in Kumase. As they recently affirmed:

[Lardan] We knew that Islam would join the people here together. It would draw them together. No one here in the zongo would join anything where Islam was not a part.

[Alawa] When you tell the Muslim that he is going to fight in the interest of his religion, he can't draw back . . . it is the only way you can get him mobilized in this thing (Allman, 1984: FN/19/1 and FN/26/1).

Indeed, at times, the basic issues which had given rise to the MAP took a second seat to Islam as the *raison d'être* of the party. All political rallies ended with shouts of "Islam! Islam! Islam!" The *Koran* was considered the MAP's main weapon in its war against Nkrumah and faith in Islam was to ensure the victory of the party. When several CPP supporters attempted to convince the Gaos and Zabramas of the Kumase zongo to renounce the MAP, the response, as reported in the *Pioneer* (23 October 1953), was: "No! We are Muslims and we are prepared to die with Islam." In late April, Ahmadu Baba warned zongo Muslims that if anyone "voted for the CPP in the next General

Election, he would sin before Allah. [Muslims] . . . should vote for Islam [for it was] . . . totally against the CPP's fraudulent practices" (*Pioneer*, 23 April 1954). Perhaps not suprisingly, Nkrumah's written request to the Kumase Imam asking that he and his followers pray for a peaceful June election was flatly refused (*Pioneer*, 15 March 1954).

Although Islam was the primary means by which the MAP mobilized support, justified its goals, and breathed fire into its battle, it was not the party's only appeal. Though considerably less well documented, there was also an attempt by certain sections of the leadership, most notably by Awooner-Renner, to inspire support for the party by arousing class sentiment among the zongo Muslims—a sentiment rooted in their economically underprivileged position within Gold Coast society. The MAP's election manifesto attacked those "who for selfish ends refused to house the workers . . . who do no more than sign Bank Notes and Dotted Lines while Mother Ghana is being consumed by the brute forces of increasing poverty" (1954: 7). Clearly, Awooner-Renner, with his long experience in socialist and pan-African politics, was a key figure in efforts to mobilize Muslims along class lines. That these efforts might also serve to underscore the class divisions within the zongo communities obviously constituted a fundamental contradiction in party ideology—a contradiction the MAP leadership was not, at this point, ready to confront.

Indeed, at times, Awooner-Renner's appeals seemed to go beyond efforts to foster class unity. He told a crowd in Kyebi in late November, "The Muslims formed about 60% of the police force, about 90% of the army and about 80% of the labour force of the country. They paid their levies and yet . . . they were treated like dirt on the ground" (*Pioneer*, 1 December 1953). Awooner-Renner's figures, exaggerated though they might be, were intended to forge class unity by underscoring the large percentage of Muslims in the Gold Coast's labor force. At the same time, they implied—and not very ambiguously—that Muslims, at the rank-and-file level, monopolized control of arms in the country. His statistics, then, at least hinted at the feasibility of armed insurrection by Muslims, given that Muslims outnumbered non-Muslims in both the police and army. One can only wonder about the source of these statistics: if the figures cited were chosen randomly, if Awooner-Renner intentionally linked class unity with access to arms, or if he envisioned the MAP as a class-based party capable, at some future date, of a coup d'état or an armed revolution. Certainly, his characterization of Muslim workers as not only "unrepresented" but "unrepresentable" within the existing governmental structures indicated the need for very dramatic changes. That there were several reports in the early months of 1954 of the MAP being firmly entrenched in the mining areas around Tarkwa may suggest that Awooner-Renner's strategy of class mobilization, if not armed insurrection, had begun to bear some fruit (*Pioneer*, 11 and 27 February 1954).

In the months before the election, the MAP was successful in mobilizing support within most of the zongo communities of the south. However, it failed to draw any significant support from the rest of the country. Even in the Northern Territories, with their large Muslim population, the party met with only limited success. Northerners considered the MAP to be as much a party of "strangers" as it was a party of Muslims. Moreover, because the MAP, during the early stages, concentrated its organizational efforts primarily on the south, when it made its move north, it was viewed as a southern import. As Price remarked on one of Awooner-Renner's visits to the north:

he was visibly an alien, could not even speak Hausa, and owing to typical Southern ignorance of the power nexus of the North, failed to call on any of the influential who could help him in his campaign (1956: 41).

Opposition support in the north would eventually be galvanized by the Northern People's Party which emerged in April 1954. Though both the MAP and the NPP were in opposition to the CPP, they failed to establish a viable working relationship and competed for votes in the north.¹⁴ By the time of the election, the MAP was in the untenable position of being able to attract less than six percent of the non-CPP votes.

With the exception of the zongo areas of the south and those few pockets of support in the north, the MAP had little, if any, backing throughout the rest of the country. Though it had established working relationships with all of the opposition parties in the south—the Ghana Congress Party, the Togoland Congress, the Ghana Nationalist Party, and the Ghana Action Party—it had difficulty drawing votes from outside the Muslim communities in the zongos. In light of the appeals of the MAP—appeals which drew heavily on the inspiration of Islam—the lack of non-Muslim support is not surprising. Even the participation in the party of a noted Asante lawyer, Cobbina Kessie, and his candidacy for a seat in the Legislative Assembly as a MAP representative did not draw out the Asante vote for the party.

According to the recollections of former MAP leaders, Kessie, a non-Muslim, was chosen to stand as a MAP candidate in the 1954 general election because there was not a western-educated Muslim from the zongo community. "Many of us were not Ghanaians," recalled Alfa Lardan, "[and] we don't know English. We could not have represented ourselves well in the Assembly without that, so we asked Kessie to stand for us" (Allman, 1984: FN/1/3). Kessie had served as counsel for several zongo leaders, had arranged with the Asantehene for the grant of land upon which the new mosque was being constructed, and was a close friend to Ahmadu Baba. He was a logical choice. Yet some within the MAP felt that a Muslim should have been chosen and that Kessie received the candidacy because of pressure

from powerful leaders within both the zongo and Asante communities. "This man," remarked Abdul Rahim Alawa, himself an aspiring politician in 1954, "was too close with the big men" (Allman, 1984: FN/26/1). As for Kessie, he would later reveal that he chose to stand as an MAP candidate because "the Muslims were very powerful. They had alot of backing . . . I joined them so that they might support me in politics and they did" (Allman, 1984: FN/1/3). Though it was a logical vehicle for bridging the gap between Asante and Muslim opposition to Nkrumah, Kessie's candidacy was as unsuccessful as the wider MAP election drive in the south. Even Kessie's crying of the Asante war song—"Ye nim ko, ye nnim dwane oo"—at an MAP rally on the eve of the election was not enough to elicit Asante support for MAP candidates.¹⁵ In the final analysis, the MAP drew barely three percent of the vote within Asante (Austin, 1964: 243-4).

Therefore, at its zenith, in the months leading to the 1954 election, the MAP remained a southern Muslim party, rooted in the stranger communities which had given it birth. Its appeals seemed limited almost entirely to zongo Muslims as the Ahmadis and the Asante Nkramo tended to support the CPP, while the Muslims of the Northern Territories supported either the newly formed Northern People's Party or the CPP (Price, 1954: 107). Indeed, some factions within the zongo itself, though few, remained faithful to Nkrumah's party. Who these CPP stalwarts were is difficult to assess, although Schildkrout (1970: 263) suggests that they tended to be from recent immigrant, non-Muslim groups or to represent rivals of MAP incumbent headmen, as was the case with Malam Mutawakilu. The latter group is the more easily documented and was probably the more numerous as it was not uncommon for local political disputes to be translated into political party rivalries.¹⁶

Unable to extend its base of support outside the stranger communities—to either Muslim or non-Muslim—and handicapped by local disputes within the zongo, the MAP perhaps was doomed in its political struggle from the very outset. Moreover, certain legal and electoral constraints outside the party's control distorted the full picture of MAP backing which did exist. A fair portion of the party's support in the zongos could not be reflected in the election because, unlike local municipal elections, national elections were closed to persons born outside British West Africa. Thus, a significant number of MAP supporters, such as the Zabrama of Kumase zongo, were unable to cast their ballots in the general election (*West Africa*, 25 December 1954: 1203). In addition, despite the concentration of Muslims in the zongos, Muslims did not make up a majority in any national constituency in the south. Only in local elections, based on ward-divisions, could the MAP count on Muslims forming a majority. In short, the municipal elections of the preceding months had been more an aberration than a "prelude of greater things to come" as national constituency boundaries alone went a long way toward undermining the political efforts of the MAP in the general election.

Yet there were more substantive reasons for the MAP's routing in the 1954 general election, some of which were simply and directly a product of life in the zongo. The party suffered from a lack of finances and from a limited leadership. An economically depressed community, the zongo was not capable of financing an elaborate party network. Its pool of potential leaders was similarly limited by inferior, if not nonexistent, educational facilities and by simple language barriers—a situation that forced the party, on more than one occasion, to turn to non-Muslims.

Yet the most important factor in explaining the electoral failure of the MAP was the fact that it was perceived, above all else, as a Muslim party. Indeed, it was with fateful irony that Islam—the force which bound together the stranger communities and breathed fire into their nascent political struggle—became the MAP's greatest electoral liability. Many Ghanaians, as Price argues, though sympathetic to the aims of the MAP, feared that its activities would “result in the ‘Pakistanisation’ of the Gold Coast” (1956: 34). Aware of these concerns, the party consistently tried to transcend its religious basis and professed on more than one occasion that the

Muslim Association Party is only a name that has been given to a political party and does not signify that only Muslims could join. . . . Our slogan, ‘Islam,’ meaning peace, makes it plain what really the party stands for (*Pioneer*, 27 April 1954).

But in the eyes of most Ghanaians, it was all too “plain”: the MAP was the party of Islam. And the religious aversion of many Ghanaians to the party was only compounded by a general xenophobia toward northerners, as Price argues, “by a recognition of the complete alieness [sic], linguistic, cultural and environmental” of people from the north. Indeed, Price is probably not stretching his point too far when he hints at a tangible class bias in the aversion of many Ghanaians toward Muslims or people from the north—“a snobbish and patronising attitude toward their poverty and backwardness in education and economic development” (1956: 33).

In the final analysis, the MAP was stuck between a rock and a hard place when it came to mobilizing support for the general election outside the stranger communities. Muslims in the Northern Territories viewed the party as a southern import with its own particular agenda and aspirations. Non-Muslims in the south viewed it as a northern or foreign-inspired party, named after a “foreign” religion and with a base among politically and educationally “backward” strangers. Though the MAP's charges of corruption against the CPP and its upholding of the sanctity of chieftancy struck a few resonant chords among the opposition forces of the Gold Coast and though the MAP consistently professed it was a national movement, it was viewed by most people in the broader society as a

sectarian group which had violated the ultimate taboo. It had mixed party politics with religion.

. . . And They Just Fade Away? The MAP and the Aftermath of the Election

After its resounding defeat in the 1954 general election, the MAP never regained the autonomy, the confidence, or the unity of the preceding months. Although it organized a boycott of CPP taxis and municipal buses and petitioned the government concerning voter fraud, its momentum was broken by the defeat of June. The organized drive for parliamentary representation was replaced by a seemingly orderless and acephalous struggle between MAP and CPP adherents in the zongo. Violent clashes erupted throughout June, with Friday prayers being held separately and under police guard for supporters of the two parties. Indeed, in both Accra and Kumase, the *Id al-Fitr* festival was celebrated in separate areas by adherents of the two opposing parties (*Pioneer*, 26 June, 11 August 1954).

By mid-July, the MAP was on the defensive. The CPP's paper, the *Evening News*, carried headlines urging the government to "Ban MAP Now!" A month later the following motion was made by a private member in the Legislative Assembly (11 August 1954):

that this House deplores the recent emergence of political parties in the Gold Coast whose membership is restricted entirely to persons of a particular tribe or of a particular religious faith, and places on record its view that political parties should ideally be organised on a national basis and should not be restricted to tribe, religious faith, colour or any other limitation likely to result in strong or even violent sentiments among its members.

The motion was seconded by the CPP's Krobo Edusei and was passed by a 72 to 14 vote. Kojo Botsio argued at the time that a total ban on the MAP would be justified because

apart from the violence that was being perpetrated in our midst by the establishment of the MAP . . . we could also see the havoc that had been caused by the Muslim religion in the Gold Coast by political acrobats who said 'Comrade' yesterday and 'Islam' today and could not even read a line of the Koran and ate pork! (*Pioneer*, 13 August 1954).

Not until 1958 would parties based on ethnic, religious, or regional affiliations be declared illegal. By then, however, the ban would be aimed not so much at suppressing the MAP as undermining the Asante National Liberation Movement—the movement which would completely overshadow the MAP by 1955.

The match which finally "set ablaze the petrol dump" of Asante nationalism, as the *Pioneer* (4 September 1954) remarked, was the CPP

government's freezing of the price of cocoa in August 1954. Less than a month later, after intensive protests by farmers—protests supported by the MAP—the Asante NLM burst on the scene not only demanding an increase in the cocoa price but asserting the rights of Asantes to self-determination in an independent Gold Coast.¹⁷ The emergence of the NLM served to revitalize the entire opposition to the CPP, but especially the MAP. The day before the Asante movement was inaugurated, Awooner-Renner told an audience in Kumase that a year earlier the MAP "had seen some cloud darkening the horizon and gave the warning but . . . [was not] heeded. But thank God, others had now come to realise the danger the MAP had pointed out." The party wanted to assure Asantes, he continued, "that whether it rains or snows, shines or otherwise, we shall stand firmly by your side." He concluded by announcing that the "CPP had wanted to ban the MAP. Now the CPP was being banned in Ashanti" (*Pioneer*, 21 September 1954).

Over the next months the NLM became the focus and the vanguard of extra-parliamentary opposition to the CPP. Less than a year after it was inaugurated, a number of opposition groups merged their identities with the Asante movement. The MAP, however, opted not to merge, arguing that it was not "prepared to forgo its political identity under any circumstances" (*Daily Graphic*, 20 September 1955). As Alfa Lardan recalled, "We had to keep the MAP to protect our interests" (Allman, 1984: FN/19/1). Yet to what extent the MAP actually was able to preserve its political identity—its position as an autonomous force within the broader opposition—is another question. While the members of the executive in Accra, most notably Awooner-Renner, were adamant concerning the autonomy of the party (insisting that the MAP had to remain independent to be an effective representative of Muslim interests), the Asante branch became almost indistinguishable from the NLM by September 1955. Some in that branch even advocated that the MAP revert to being the Muslim Association and leave opposition politics to the NLM (*West Africa*, 1 October 1955: 154). As Alawa recalled, the "NLM would make the decisions . . . they had the power [so] they sometimes dictated to us" (Allman, 1984: FN/26/1). Thus, by the final months of 1955 there was a growing rift within the MAP between the Accra and Kumase branches—a rift that was not only regional, but historical and ideological as well. Awooner-Renner's vision of a party of the downtrodden was increasingly at odds with the zongo leadership's aim of working closely with traditional powers in Asante to protect the "dignity and sanctity of chiefship."

In Accra, Awooner-Renner attempted to keep alive his dream of mobilizing, country-wide, the "hewers of wood and carriers of water." His dream required MAP autonomy for reasons of class mobilization. However, he found himself increasingly isolated within the party and unable to exert much influence over the decision-making process. The contradictions inherent in the party's

appeals had come to the surface, and Awooner-Renner had lost. The party's executive was securely in the hands of the traditional power figures of the Kumase zongo—men like Ahmadu Baba. Although these leaders had facilitated the rapid expansion of the party into Asante, they were also men of considerable power and wealth. They were operating in an entirely different context than Awooner-Renner—a context dominated by the realities, social and historical, of life in Asante. Like the NLM's most influential supporter, the Asantehene, these men sought to preserve their privileged position in the face of Nkrumah's efforts to undermine the power of traditional authorities. When the Asantehene called upon all the zongo headman to appear before him in April 1955, he made this appeal:

You are strangers sojourning in our midst. We need your support and cooperation. I hope you would not deny me your support and help.

Ahmadu Baba replied, "It is our earnest desire to continue to cooperate with the Kumase State Council and to lend our support" (Kumase State Council, 15 April 1955). No one could forget that the Asantehene was, as Schildkrout writes, the "owner of the town" (1978: 75).

In the end, the relationship between the NLM and the MAP became one of subordination rather than of cooperation as the struggle for Muslim civil rights (not to mention the struggle envisioned by Awooner-Renner) took a back seat to Asante's battle for self-determination. The Asante branch of the MAP—the most militant and active before the 1954 election—was virtually enveloped by the NLM. From the highest levels to the lowest, MAP supporters were integrated into the structure of the Asante movement. Cobbina Kessie became known as the political theoretician of the NLM (*West Africa*, 1 October 1955: 927), while unemployed Muslims from the zongo formed the bulk of recruits into the movement's Action Groupers—an armed vigilante squad organized by the NLM to wage both an offensive and defensive struggle against the CPP on the street corners of Kumase.

Yet even its close alliance with, or subordination to, the Asante NLM was not enough to transform the MAP into an electoral force with which to be reckoned. In the 1956 general election—the last before independence was granted—the MAP only gained one seat again. Cobbina Kessie captured the seat for Kumase North. Yet everyone realized that his victory, after a crushing defeat in the 1954 election, was more an NLM than an MAP victory. It reaffirmed the non-viability of the MAP as an independent political force in the Gold Coast. Any electoral victory seemed fatefully dependent upon the historic links which bound the zongo Muslims to Asante, which tied the zongo headmen to the Asantehene, which subordinated the MAP to the NLM.

Dismal as was the MAP's situation after the election, the picture for the opposition as a whole held little more promise. The 1956 elec-

tion witnessed the CPP being returned with another overwhelming majority and capturing 71 of the 104 seats in the assembly. Despite the political turbulence of the preceding two years, the CPP retained much of its base of support and triumphantly led the Gold Coast to independence on 6 March 1957. By then, the Muslim forces were in complete disarray and it took only a few strokes of the legislative pen to put an end summarily to the MAP's struggle for Muslim civil rights. The Deportation Act of August 1957 authorized the removal of both Ahmadu Baba and Alfa Lardan from Ghana to Nigeria on the spurious grounds that they were not Ghanaian citizens. Lardan, who returned to Ghana after Nkrumah was overthrown, maintained that both he and Baba were Ghanaian citizens but were greatly feared for the power they wielded in the zongo community of Kumase: "I was an Arabic teacher, I had so many people under me . . . and Ahmadu Baba was very rich . . . Nkrumah feared us" (Allman, 1984: FN/19/1 and 2).¹⁸ By the end of 1957, the CPP-dominated assembly struck yet another blow to the crumbling opposition by banning all political parties based on region, ethnicity, or religion. The component parts of the opposition, including the MAP, were forced to reconstitute themselves as the United Party. Just four years after it had burst onto the political scene with such zeal, the MAP—the party of strangers, of the "unrepresented and unrepresentable"—came to an abrupt end.

The MAP left no monumental legacy. It failed on all counts to achieve its goal of Muslim representation in every level of government and certainly fell far short of Awooner-Renner's desire to mobilize the downtrodden. Yet, it stands as a very important piece of the political puzzle in late colonial society. Not only did it constitute the first attempt by Muslims in the Gold Coast to organize politically for their own social and civil well-being, it set many of the precedents for opposition politics in Ghana. Much of that opposition would be expressed through sectarian or communal organizations, creating a pattern which has led many political scientists and historians to discount the opposition to Nkrumah as merely an assortment of primordial responses to the modern state.¹⁹

Yet the dynamics of Muslim mobilization in the early 1950s suggest that there was more behind the MAP's chants of "Islam! Islam!" than religious fervor. As Jitendra Mohan argued over two decades ago:

the particular hardships and grievances not yet informed by a common class perspective found expression through archaic social forms, partly because . . . the religious (Islamic) tie was more comprehensive than the purely occupational ones and partly because the traditional order provided a ready made framework of communication and leadership (1967: 206).²⁰

In short, though Islam provided the specific rallying cry for mobilization, it was for mobilization around issues which reflected the gen-

eral civil and class antagonisms of colonial Gold Coast society. Thus, the means of mobilizing support may have been sectarian, but the issues which instigated political activity clearly were not. Perhaps no one understood this better than Awooner-Renner. He remained a socialist and a pan-Africanist throughout his entire life, yet he saw no contradiction between his political philosophy and his attempts to organize the exploited through religious appeals. Islam, in his eyes, was an effective weapon of mobilization against economic exploitation, as well as religious prejudice.

Yet the sort of sectarian mobilization utilized by the MAP and the myriad of opposition groups which followed did not provide a solution to the problem of organizing the exploited to fight against their exploitation. One of the more fateful antinomies running through Ghanaian, or perhaps African, politics generally, is that mobilization along these lines not only precluded broad-based organizational efforts, but bound the exploited masses to existing traditional authority structures. In such a situation, the specific interests of the traditional powers were destined to prevail. Thus, as Awooner-Renner's experiences reveal, that very weapon of mobilization—Islam—which had proven so successful as a tool for organizing the “unrepresented,” at one and the same time, undercut attempts to broaden the party's base along class lines and bound the existing base of support—the strangers of the zongo—to their conservative rulers. The power of those rulers over the men and women of the stranger community was never threatened or put into question. When the zongo leaders in Asante subordinated the struggle of the MAP to that of their Asante hosts—in an act which affirmed the common interests of traditional rulers, whether stranger or host—there was nothing Awooner-Renner could do. Islam was, in the end, a double-edged sword.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Ivor Wilks, John Hunwick and David Roediger for their comments on and criticisms of earlier versions of this paper. I also wish to acknowledge my debt to Enid Schildkrout for her work on Kumase's zongo community. By so shaping my understanding of the stranger community, her painstaking research has done much to sharpen my sensitivity to the complexities of Muslim politics in Kumase. Research in Ghana and Great Britain was funded by a Fulbright-Hays Dissertation Year Fellowship in 1984. Additional research at the British Public Record Office in London was made possible by a 1988 ACLS Grant-in-Aid. Fieldnotes are on deposit at the Herskovits Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.
2. Because of the thirty-year rule governing the release of documentation, archival research by historians on the final years of colonial rule and the transition to independence is still in its infancy. Much of this research is only now reaching publication, but already has given rise to a very serious debate over the nature and limitations of colonial documentation. Richard Crook (1986) outlined the substance of this debate when he argued that the opening of the imperial archives has led to a “shift of emphasis” in historical writing away from mass nationalist movements and back to imperial policy—“even to the extent of asserting that imperial

policy was the prime mover" in the decolonization process. This article is not a part of the trend described by Crook for two reasons. First, colonial documentation (in the British Public Record Office and in the Ghana National Archives) on the Muslim Association Party is sketchy at best. Second, the article's aim is to grapple with the complexities of political mobilization in the final years of colonial rule, not to reconstruct colonial policy.

3. For the method Price (1956) used to arrive at this estimate, see p. 8. For his discussion of the problems with the accuracy of the 1948 Census, see p. 23.
4. For example, Austin and Tordoff suggest, based on a 1955 Population Survey, that 24 percent of the population of Kumase, in the Asante Region, consisted of migrants from Northern Ghana, while approximately 6 percent were immigrants from Nigeria and other neighboring countries (1960: 130). Although Austin and Tordoff do not provide figures on the number of Muslims represented in this 30 percent, based on the prevalence of Islam in the areas from which these migrants came, it is obvious that a good portion of Kumase's residents, particularly in the areas set aside for stranger occupation, were Muslims.
5. The following Hausa headmen served as the Serikin Zongo during the colonial period: Mallam Sumanu, 1902-19; Mallam Sallow, 1919-32; Mallam Ali, 1932-44; Mallam Adamu Sokoto, 1944-49; Mallam Ahmadu Baba, 1949-57. According to statute, however, only Mallam Sallow had the official recognition of the colonial authorities as Serikin Zongo. Indeed, in 1949, Kumase's District Commissioner wrote to Ahmadu Baba that he had "received some communication . . . in which you style yourself as Serikin Zongo." He reminded Baba, "you are not recognized by Government or by the Asantehene as Chief of the Kumasi Zongo, but as Headman of the Hausas in the Zongo." See AROF, 1949: Kumase District Commissioner to Ahmadu Baba, dd. 27 July 1949 and Kumase Hausa Community to Kumase District Commissioner, dd. 10 August 1949.
6. The divisions which have riddled the Muslim community in Asante since the 1950s (divisions between Asante Nkramo and zongo Muslims and, within the zongo, between Hausa and non-Hausa and within the Hausa group itself) gained expression in the disputes over the Kumase Mosque. Beginning with fund-raising for the mosque in the early fifties, down to the present, the symbol of the unity of the Muslim community—its mosque—has constantly been the symbol and source of a variety of political rivalries, both local and national. See Schildkrout, 1974.
7. As Boahen recounts, the West African Youth League was founded in Accra by I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, a native of Sierra Leone, with the assistance of Awooner-Renner. The aim of the League was to "champion the cause of the people and particularly the less favoured and downtrodden, [and] to defend the natural constitutional rights of the people of West Africa" (1975: 142-6).
8. For the correspondence detailing the nature of the working relationship between the CPP and the MAP in the 1951 election, see the MAP's *Manifesto of the Moslem Association Party for the General Elections, June 15th 1954*. Included is the correspondence pertaining to the party's decision to split from the CPP.
9. As Price notes, this "was advantageous to the MAP in the municipal election, as many of the Muslim immigrants in the south are from French territory and have French citizenship" (1956: 25).
10. The Zongo Volunteers were formed in 1949 by Alfa Lardan and Alhaji Moru in response to the high crime rate in the zongo and the inability, ineffectiveness or, perhaps, the unwillingness of the local police to protect the community. The organization sends out patrols of volunteers every evening to keep watch over the neighborhood. The Zongo Volunteers were still in operation as of 1984.
11. Interestingly, CPP adherents in Asante took the lesson to heart as well, as they sensed that the MAP was posing a broader, more serious threat to the hegemony of the CPP in Asante than had been posed before. The pro-CPP Asante Youth Association sought to counter the activities of the MAP by attacking it at its very roots. In early

- October, it passed a resolution urging the government not to allow "strangers in Kumasi or any town . . . to stay in one area of the town as a group." They argued that "the grouping of strangers such as those in the zongo usually constituted a menace, in that they more often caused troubles." See *Pioneer*, 13 October 1953.
12. The MAP victories in Kumase were as follows: Ward 7—Rahim Alawa, 988 of 1449 votes cast; Ward 10—Mohammed Mekano, 511 of 839 votes cast; Ward 13—Akanni Smith, 855 of 1127 votes cast; Ward 16—Mumuni Asante Nkramo, 635 of 1215 votes cast.
 13. According to the *Pioneer* (31 December 1953), the MAP received a letter of encouragement and support from Alhaji Ibrahim Kawlak, "Professor and Head of all the Muslims in the French Sudan," in which he "urged them on in their new found unity. He said politics were not new to Muslims. . . . Let the unbelievers rave, they were bound to go down . . . Law was based on the word of God and so the followers of God had the right to do politics."
 14. In the days before the election, accusations flew between the NPP and the MAP. MAP leaders were annoyed by the alliance of the NPP with the Ghana Congress Party and claimed that the "GCP wanted to use Muslims to get into the Assembly" and would then neglect them. The NPP charged that the MAP had not offered any financial assistance to the party, as the GCP had done, when it was forming (an accusation that the MAP denied). The MAP declared that the GCP was trying to undermine the MAP in the North. See *Pioneer*, 4 and 9 June 1954. See, also, Ladouceur, 1979: 117.
 15. "Ye nim ko, ye nnim dwane oo" is translated as "we know how to fight, we don't know how to run away."
 16. For example, in 1956 the headman of the Fra-Fra, Alamidu, supported the CPP but was forced to flee to Accra. Many of the Fra-Fra wanted to keep the stool vacant until he returned. However, Ahmadu Baba and other MAP leaders thought the stool should be filled by a "sympathetic" headman. The Mamprussi headman took it upon himself to appoint or designate a successor, Abiga Fra-Fra, who had twice previously been destooled as the Fra-Fra headman, once for stealing soldiers' money after the war. See AROF, 1956. For a broader discussion of the translation of local disputes into political party rivalries, see Austin, 1964: 352-3 and 1967: 542.
 17. For an examination of the origins and development of the Asante NLM, see Allman, 1987 and 1990.
 18. Lardan, in fact, was born in Kumase. His father migrated to Kumase from Nigeria sometime during World War I. When Lardan was deported to Kano in 1957, it was the first time he had set foot on Nigerian soil.
 19. Many contemporary chroniclers of this period, such as Apter and Austin, were much influenced by the work of Clifford Geertz on primordial sentiments and national integration. See Geertz, 1963.
 20. One wonders why Mohan chose to use the word "archaic" to describe the social forms through which class and civil antagonisms have found expression in Ghanaian society. Clearly, they are as modern as the grievances and hardships of colonial and post-colonial society. Historical social forms may have been a more apt description.

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