

The Youth And Rituals In Post-Conflict Rebuilding: The Psychosocial Dimension Of Post-Conflict Rebuilding In The Kpandai District In Contemporary Times

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Abstract

Northern Ghana has gone through decades of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts since the 1980s. The present-day Kpandai District was ravaged by an inter-ethnic conflict in 1991/1992, between the Nawuri/Nchumuru and the Gonja, over allodial rights. In both the physical confrontations and rebuilding processes, the youth and rituals played critical roles. However, there is hardly any systematic analysis of the role of the youth and rituals in the post-conflict rebuilding scheme in the Kpandai District. This paper analyzes the roles played by traditional rituals and the Nawuri youth (Nawuri Professionals' Association, NPA) in post-conflict rebuilding schemes in Kpandai. Using the traditional historical method of reconstructing a narrative from primary and secondary sources, this paper examines the psychosocial dimension and underlines the place of local resources in post-conflict rebuilding in the Kpandai District in the Northern Region of Ghana. It uses the Nawuri Professionals' Association (NPA) – a youth group of the Nawuri – as a case study. The paper argues that the youth and the use of rituals as psychosocial factors serve as effective variables for post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society in the Kpandai District.

Keywords: Association, Culture, Identity, Mobilization, Nawuri, Peacebuilding, Post-Conflict, Professionals, Psychosocial, Renaissance, Rituals, Youth, Rebuilding

Introduction

In Northern Ghana, youth associations are largely driven by young men and women of different age brackets, approximately between the ages of 15 and 59. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, 58% of women in Ghana are between the ages of 15 and 59; men between those ages form 60.6% of Ghana's population (GSS, 2021). The social spaces of Northern Ghana are dominated by youth groups of different kinds with members of different age brackets. Of all the youth groups, the dominant ones are the ethnic youth associations. Driven by the desire to marshal local resources, using ethnicity as a stimulating and binding element, ethnic youth associations were formed among various ethnic groups in Northern Ghana in the early 1970s (Tolton, 2010; Mbowura, 2022a). The sprouting of ethnic youth associations in Northern Ghana in the 1970s was borne out of the socio-political exigencies of the time, which necessitated the exploitation of ethnic resources and mobilisation of local actors as tools for accelerated development in rural communities. Given this philosophy, the crystallization of ethnic youth associations soon became a common practice in Northern Ghana. Some of the vibrant ethnic youth associations formed in the 1970s included the

Gonja Youth Association, Konkomba Youth Association, Dagomba Youth Association, Chamba Youth Association, Nawuri Youth Association, Nanumba Youth Association. These youth associations did not only dominate the local social spaces in Northern Ghana, but also gradually gained currency in the political spaces in the region. Apart from championing the politics of ethnic identity, some of the ethnic youth associations gradually became 'traditional parliaments' that discussed and passed resolutions on political issues within their traditional areas. They also became power brokers and decision-making bodies of their respective ethnic groups. Hence, the ethnic youth associations exerted considerable influence in the social and political spaces in Northern Ghana since their formation in the 1970s (Talton, 2010).

The Nawuri Professionals' Association (NPA) was one of such vibrant youth associations in Northern Ghana. Formed in 2019, the NPA soon eclipsed the Nawuri Youth Association, and has dominated the social space in Kpandai over the past four years. It utilised a variety of psychosocial factors to engineer post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society. This paper examines the psychosocial devices utilised by the NPA for post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society. It emphasises the use

of rituals and social mechanisms in post-conflict rebuilding agenda. This study is significant because it contributes to existing literature on youth engagements and ritual performances in the reconstruction of the narrative on a development agenda. Second, it builds on the literature on the youth in peacebuilding and the youth as actors in development within local spaces. Third, it provides perspectives on how psychosocial factors play a critical role in post-conflict rebuilding schemes.

Research Design and Methodology

This paper utilised the explanatory case study design to analyse data within the perspective of historical method that synthesised primary and secondary data into a coherent narrative. It is instructive to point out that the explanatory case design seeks to “clarify why and how there is a relationship between two aspects of a situation or phenomenon” (Kumar, 2014: 13). Using the explanatory case design to establish a symmetrical relationship between psychosocial factors and post-conflict rebuilding, this paper drew evidence from traditional historical sources such as archival documents, private papers, reports, interviews and monographs. Monographs were reviewed to situate the study within existing literature, as well as to glean data on the role of psychosocial factors in post-conflict rebuilding in the Kpandai District. Furthermore, oral data were gathered from Nawuri communities in the Kpandai District between November and December of 2022. In all, thirty (30) participants were interviewed through the use of unstructured interview questions to obtain oral data. With emphasis on the NPA (a youth group), the pieces of evidence derived from both the documentary and non-documentary sources were synthesised and analysed for the reconstruction of the narrative on the relationship between psychosocial factors and post-conflict rebuilding in the Kpandai District.

Literature Review on Youth Studies

One perspective on youth studies examines or uses the term ‘generation’ as a measurement of the youth (Cohen, 2003). The ‘generation’ thesis places youth studies within the purview of the transitions of adolescents to adulthood, its patterns and outcomes. Indexes such as maturity to enter the labour market, ability to take independent decisions without the shackles of parental control, rights to marry, and franchise at an adult age, among others, are used as measurement of the transition of adolescents to adulthood (Cohen, 2003). The generation thesis analyses the patterns of the

transition, including the inequalities of the patterns in and among societies (Cohen, 2003).

A different perspective on youth studies examines the concept “youth” within the purview of culture (Bennett, 2002). Cultural forms, based largely on the philosophy of cultural relativism, are used as the measurement of the youth. This thesis examines the interplay between the youth and cultural norms, highlighting the extent to which cultures contribute in forming the behavioural patterns, focus and interests of the youth (Bennett, 2002).

Other scholars, mindful of the inadequacies of the separate applications of the ‘generation’ and the ‘culture’ theses to youth studies, used a synthesis of the two. They argue that any attempt to study the youth from one perspective would not give a nuanced picture of youth issues (Furlong and Woodman, 2015; Furlong et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Bennett and Hodkinson, 2012; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). They further argue that any rigid application of either the ‘generation’ thesis or the ‘culture’ thesis to the exclusion of the other to youth studies is disingenuous, as it would not bring out the realities about the youth to fore. In short, they argue that the patterns of transition of the youth and the cultural milieu within which the youth find themselves are intertwined, i.e., both the generational factors and cultural indexes that exert influences are mutually inclusive (Henderson et al., 2007; Bennett and Hodkinson, 2012).

Beyond the philosophical discourse on the pillars of youth studies, scholarship has also focused on youth engagement or participation. The Youth Leadership Institute (2009: 13) defined youth participation as “the active, empowered, and intentional partnership with youth as stakeholders, problem solvers, and change agents in their communities.” To the USAID, youth engagement involves “elevating their voices and ensuring meaningful opportunities to contribute to resolving issues and promoting positive change in their communities and nations” (USAID Youth in Development Policy, 2012: 11). In the light of this contextualization, the USAID argues that “there is a need to improve the quality of partnerships with youth, to provide more concrete platforms for youth participation, to support existing local youth networks and initiatives, and to include youth in science, technology and innovation initiatives” (USAID Youth in Development Policy, 2012: 11). Given this realization, the USAID seeks to “mainstream and integrate youth issues and engage young people across agency initiatives and operations” (USAID, 2012: 1). There is burgeoning literature on youth engagement. Some of them focused on the reciprocity of youth-adult

volunteers (Benson et al., 2006; Zeldin et al., 2005). Others have also focused on the utility that the youth derive from undertaking duties traditionally reserved for adults (Flanagan et al., 2010; Kasumagic, 2008; Rogoff, 2003). Yet, a strand of scholarship on youth engagement has paid attention to the quality of the output of youth participations in programs with adults, arguing that there is uneven result in the quality of youth participation due largely to differences in the experiences of the youth, as well as the differences in youth-adult relationships within programmes (Granger, 2008; Greene et al.). Another strand of literature on youth engagement focused on how the youth perceive their experiences in the participation in programmes with adults (Larson and Angus, 2011; Shernoff, 2010). Hart (1992) constructed a ladder to show the various levels of youth engagement in decision-making. His framework shows that youth participation occurs at the higher level of the ladder while manipulation, tokenism and decoration are examples of non-participation of the youth in decision-making, and that this usually occurs at the lower rungs of the ladder. This paper does not seek to wade into the philosophical discourses on ‘generation’ and ‘culture’ theses on youth studies. Rather, the paper is placed within the remit of youth engagement thesis. It contributes to the youth engagement thesis by showing the extent to which a youth group (the NPA) contributes to post-conflict rebuilding in the Kpandai District in the Northern Region of Ghana.

Nawuri Youth Association (NYA): An Emasculated Dilemma

Prior to the emergence of the NPA in the social space in Kpandai and its environs, the Nawuri Youth Association (NYA) was the catalyst for the mobilisation of the Nawuri for social projects. Until its emasculation in about the 2010s, the NYA provided a platform for social, political, and to some extent, economic directions of the Nawuri. The NYA was one of the ethnic youth associations formed in Northern Region of Ghana in the 1970s. Historically, its exact date of formation is unknown, but there are suggestions that it was formed in 1971 (Appiah, 1991; Mbowura, 2022a). Its objective was to rally the Nawuri youth for a common course (Mbowura, 2022a). However, its overriding objective was to serve as the mouthpiece of the Nawuri on all issues (Ampiah, 1991). As the mouthpiece of the Nawuri, The NYA became a stakeholder in traditional politics among the Nawuri. In addition, the executives of the NYA radicalized Nawuri struggle for freedom from Gonja domination that had occupied the social and political spaces in Kpandai and its environs since

the 1930s (Mbowura, 2012). By 1991, the NYA had become so powerful that it rallied the Nawuri to oppose Gonja attempt to hold their annual Gonjaland youth association conference in Kpandai – a resistance that eventually degenerated into an armed conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja (Ampiah, 1991; Mbowura, 2014). The armed conflict occurred in three different phases, and in all the phases, the *ayafɔle* (able young men – youth), stimulated by the clarion call by the NYA leaders to fight for their freedom, provided the fuel for Nawuri war efforts at the theatre of war (Mbowura, 2022a). Away from the theatre of war, the NYA leaders represented the Nawuri at all fora established for peacebuilding and social rebuilding during and after the armed conflict (Mbowura, 2022a).

One would have expected that NYA would continue to make itself visible in the social and political spaces in Kpandai and its environs after the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. However, the NYA soon became an antithesis of an empowering liberation organization. It dramatically lost its power and clout in the social and political spaces in Kpandai and its environs. Any attempt to reconstruct the weakening space of the NYA during this period must necessarily take into account two main reasons. First, the NYA suffered a comatose due to accidental circumstances. The unifying feature of the NYA was a common desire of its leaders to rally the Nawuri to fight for their liberation from Gonja rule. A decade after the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, it became evident that the Gonja menace and Gonja clout in the sociopolitical space in Kpandai had been completely defenestrated (Interview with Nana Samson Donkor, Kpandai. November 13, 2022). As the distinctive catalyst to NYA activism was eliminated, the militancy of NYA leaders waned considerably. Hence, the NYA lost the distinctive flavour that characterized its militancy and activism in the sociopolitical space in Kpandai prior to the Nawuri-Gonja conflict (Interview with Nana Samson Donkor, Kpandai. November 13, 2022).

Second, the post-Nawuri-Gonja conflict era saw NYA’s attempt to assume the position of “king makers” in the traditional body-polity of the Nawuri (Interview with Nana Seidu, Bladjai. October 12, 2022). Without any historical and traditional antecedence, NYA entered into chieftaincy matters with an arrogated power to select or impose candidates on Nawuri communities for installation as chiefs. In other cases, the NYA leaders threw their weight behind some claimants to a stool in instances where there

were two or more claimants (Nana Samson Donkor, personal communication, November 13, 2022). To this end, the NYA unleashed its propaganda machinery against other contestants, sparking controversies, animosities and widespread disenchantment that weakened the NYA and the ideals it stood for. As uproar against NYA's interferences in Nawuri chieftaincy matters grew in proportions, the NYA attempted to accentuate its past achievements by trumpeting what it had achieved in the past for the Nawuri as a means to conceal the negative repercussions of its political gerrymandering. But its attempts failed because its undermining of the rigour and sanctity of the chieftaincy institution could not be placated by any reminiscences of its past achievements (Interview with Nana Seidu, Bladjai. October 12, 2022). As the image of the NYA dwindled, its ideal of the homogenisation and collectivisation of Nawuri issues for a common purpose was also defenestrated. Hence, the intricate connection between NYA and the Nawuri faded away considerably. Soon, the NYA became a "caricature tantamount to a dying person on a life support machine" (Interview with Kizito Atorsah, Accra. November 20, 2022). Eventually, the NYA lost its aura, and could no longer bring the Nawuri together through common and vicariously shared experiences (Interview with Kizito Atorsah, Accra. November 20, 2022). It was the emasculation of NYA and the loss of its aura that necessitated the formation of the NPA.

The Formation of the Nawuri Professionals' Association (NPA)

Apart from the weakened strength of the NYA, already discussed above, the formation of the NPA can be attributed to other factors. One factor was the failure to revitalise and rejuvenate NYA to make it vibrant. Some founding members of the NPA domiciled in the 'diaspora' attempted to combine their energies and knowledge to the revitalisation of NYA, and they attempted to contest for NYA positions. However, the NYA executives in Kpandai put impediments on their way. Recounting his ordeal in his attempt to contest for NYA position, Kizito Atorsah said:

I tried to contest for the position of NYA secretary. Another person also declared his intention to contest for the chairmanship position. To our surprise, the NYA president at the time informed us that we were not qualified to run for those positions because we were not domiciled in Nawuriland, but rather domiciled in Accra or other places outside

Nawruiland. Though I strongly disputed his claim, citing other youth associations in Northern Ghana as an example where their executive members were domiciled in Accra, Kumasi and other areas outside their traditional areas, NYA executives refused to accept my argument. Initially, I decided to take NYA to court, but upon a second thought, I decided to formulate ideas for the formation of a parallel Nawuri youth organisation to take over the sociopolitical space in Nawuriland (Interview with Kizito Atorsah, Accra. November 20, 2022).

One vexatious issue that left many Nawuri intellectuals and working class stupefied was the putrefied attitude of the executives of NYA towards the politics of regional reorganisation in Ghana in 2017/2018. On October 19, 2017, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo appointed members of the Commission of Enquiry into the Creation of New Regions for the equitable distribution of resources for balanced development (Brobbeey Report, 2018). In the midst of the politics of inclusion and/or exclusion in existing and proposed regions, NYA failed to provide the leadership to fight for the inclusion of the Kpandai District in the proposed Oti Region. Consequently, three different groups emerged on the front of the Nawuri, Nchumuru and the Konkomba on the politics of the region the Kpandai District should belong to. One group campaigned for the inclusion of the Kpandai District in the proposed Savanna Region; another campaigned for the inclusion of the district in the proposed Oti Region; and yet a third group canvassed for the retention of the district in the Northern Region (Brobbeey, 2018). As the Brobbeey Commission (2018: 298) lucidly put it:

At the Salaga and Accra public hearings on the proposed Savannah Region, a number of contributors expressed support for Kpandai District to join the proposed Savannah Region. However, at the public hearings in Kete-Krachi, Nkwanta, Jasikan and Accra as well as engagement with the Members of Parliament from selected regions, a similar number of contributors expressed their preference for the Kpandai District to join the proposed Oti Region. A third group was of the view that the Kpandai District should remain in the Northern Region after the new region(s) is created.

On the basis of the uncoordinated approach of the campaign to include the Kpandai District in the proposed Oti Region, the Brobbey Commission decided that the Kpandai District should be retained in the Northern Region (Brobbey Report, 2018: 298). The non-inclusion of the Kpandai District in the Oti Region made non-executives of NYA, who later became key founding members of the NPA (notably, Mr. Nyifene Vincent, Mr. Bediako Kpebu, Nana J.K. Ntoso Akubanyi, Mr. Albert Kwajo Asunke, Mr. Dare Kwasi Moses and Mr. Albert Iddisah) to organize the Nawuri youth to demonstrate against the Brobbey Commission. In their petition to President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, the demonstrators pointed out that historically, culturally and development-wise, it was unacceptable for the Brobbey Commission to exclude the Kpandai District from the proposed Oti Region (Concerned Nawuri Youth, 2019). Parts of their petition read:

We are appalled by the Justice Brobbey Commission which recommended the non-inclusion of the Kpandai District from the Oti Region and the apparent failure of the Government to look beyond the Committee's recommendations in the interest of the Kpandai District ... The Justice Brobbey Commission's recommendation that Kpandai District should be excluded from the Oti Region because of perceived divided front was a jaundiced conclusion. It begs the question that there should be absolute consensus of the people of the Kpandai District in the inclusion of the district in the Oti Region ... To the best of our knowledge, the Commission took petitions from chiefs and opinion leaders from the various districts and areas to assess the need for the creation of regions. As far as we are concerned, the chiefs and elder (sic) of the Nawuris, Nchumurusand (sic) [and] other settler ethnic groups in the Kpandai District overwhelmingly presented petitions for the inclusion of our district in the Oti Region (Concerned Nawuri Youth, 2019: 1-2).

Another reason for the formation of the NPA was the need to marshal local resources for the Development of Kpandai and its environs. First, NPA seeks "to foster unity, fraternity, education, skills development among Nawuris and to seek

welfare of our members" (NPA Constitution, Article 2(C), 2019). Second, NPA seeks to foster unity among the Nawuri as a catalyst for development. Given its desire to foster unity among the Nawuri, the NPA adopted the motto Kamankyor Kabugya (literally meaning "small but powerful"). Explaining the rationale for the motto, the NPA said, "our motto is coined out of an established basic fact that the ethnic group called Nawuris are a fragment of the Guan fraternity and are NOT MANY (literally, Kamankyor) but in OUR UNITY, we are MORE POWERFUL (literally, Kabugya)" (NPA Constitution, Article 1(B), 2019).

The NPA and the Psychosocial Factors in Post-Conflict Rebuilding: Empirical Evidence and Analysis

The emergence of the NPA has revolutionised the social space among the Nawuri in particular and the Kpandai District as a whole. Its activities in the social space in the Kpandai District can be analysed under four broad thematic areas, namely, rituals and cultural renaissance as psychosocial factors for post-conflict rebuilding, peacebuilding, NPA and Nawuri identity, and NPA and social mobilisation for development.

Psychosocial Factors for Post-Conflict Rebuilding

Central to NPA's activities to ensure post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society was the use of rituals as psychological devices to marshal the Nawuri youth to partake in social activities in Kpandai in the post-conflict era (Interview with NPA secretary, Jerry James Maafo, Accra. December 15, 2022). To provide a platform for ritual performances, the NPA sought to create a delicate desire for enculturation to ensure that Nawuri youth learnt and participated in their culture. In its weeklong homecoming programmes, the NPA ensured that the cultural displays of the Nawuri formed the core of its activities. This therefore laid a framework for the youth to learn and participate in Nawuri cultural performances. As the NPA homecoming programmes were highly patronised by Nawuri youth, the NPA created among the youth the craze for Nawuri culture. Consequently, weeks before each homecoming programme, Nawuri youth busied themselves learning and perfecting skills in various Nawuri cultural performances. The result was that a new phenomenon of cultural renaissance emerged among the Nawuri of all age brackets. With this new phenomenon, the youth did no longer frown upon their culture, particularly traditional rituals,

but became active actors and participants in Nawuri culture within the existing sociocultural milieu of the Nawuri (Interview with Jerry James Maafo, Accra. December 15, 2022). With this new phenomenon, the NPA succeeded in entrenching the view among the Nawuri youth that enculturation and promotion of Nawuri culture are key building blocks for building a strong social space of the Nawuri within the local and international arenas (Interview with Matthew Sariba Yane, Kitari. December 14, 2022). Eulogizing the enculturation drive of the NPA, a respondent argued:

NPA came into the social space of the Nawuri at the right time. In a century that westernisation and technological imperatives have made the youth aliens of their cultures and societies, it was difficult to get the youth of the Nawuri to participate in their culture, particularly those aspects of their culture that revolved around ritual performances. Many Nawuri young men and women described Nawuri culture as anachronistic, paganistic and that it was inconsistent with civilisation in the modern era. Hence, they shied away from Nawuri cultural

dances and ritual performances. However, when the NPA began to promote Nawuri cultural performances in its homecoming programmes, it succeeded in making young Nawuri men and women to quickly embrace Nawuri culture, including all its nomenclatures such as ritual performances (Interview with Matthew Sariba Yane, Kitari. December 14, 2022).

It is significant to note that the enculturation of the Nawuri youth was holistic; it was not limited to the participation in Nawuri cultural dances, but was also extended to their participation in Nawuri ritual performances and practices. The youth's endorsement of Nawuri ritual practices ushered in Nawuri social space the feeling that an individual Nawuri's identity was embedded in Nawuri traditions and culture, and that without submerging oneself in the culture, the identity of the individual Nawuri was either lost or compromised with (Interview with Matthew Sariba Yane, Kitari. December 14, 2022). By injecting the craze for enculturation among the Nawuri youth, the NPA promoted a decolonisation and de-westernisation of the mindset of Nawuri youth (Interview with Matthew Sariba Yane, Kitari. December 14, 2022).

Plate 1: Youth Participation in the Ritualisation of the Land



Source: Authors' Field Research, 2022

Plate 2: Youth Participations in Nawuri Traditional Dance Performances



Source: Authors' Field Research, 2022

Apart from ejecting the spirit of enculturation among Nawuri youth, the activities of the NPA have revived a ritual practice among the Nawuri that had been neglected to the point of extinction. In its homecoming activities, the NPA patronized the magico-ritual practices of a secret society of Nawuri women (alijii) associated with a transnational cult, *chankpana* (Mbowura, 2022b). The NPA employed the *chankpana* ritual performances as a psychological tool for post-conflict reconstruction and social engineering. In its week-long homecoming festivities between 24-31 December each year, the NPA invited the members of the *chankpana* secret society (alijii) to invoke the *chankpana* spirit. The ritual performances of the alijii were intended to invoke the spirit of the *chankpana* to protect Nawuri communities from spiritual and physical activities. According to Mbowura (2022b), the *chankpana* rituals were psychological devices utilized by the Nawuri for post-conflict rebuilding in a number of ways. Psychologically, it was believed that the rituals commanded the spirit of the *chankpana* cult to ward off spiritual attacks on Nawuri communities. Furthermore, during the rituals associated with the *chankpana* performances of its devotees (alijii), at least one devotee was possessed by the *chankpana* spirit to foretell the future (Mbowura, 2022b). Through this, the *chankpana* ritual performances provided psychological devices for the Nawuri to

deal with the quagmires of the year(s) ahead. Finally, the climax of the ritual performance of the *chankpana*, the ritual sacrifice of a goat and fowl through strangulation and decapitation, respectively, was used to solicit spiritual interventions for peacebuilding. As Mbowura (2022b: 765) described the ritual performance:

In the *Ogou nii na lɛɛ* (ritual sacrifice of a goat by hitting it on the ground till it dies) as well as the sacrifice of a fowl by the *Olamie* – beheading a fowl by placing its head between the hallux and long toe and chopping off its head – the alijii performed sacrifices to *Chankpana* for peace and prosperity of their various communities.

Through the utilisation of the ritual performances connected with the *chankpana* cult, the NPA did not only revive interests in the secret society and all the rituals associated with it, but also reinforced its re-institutionalisation in the social, ritual and cultural spaces of the Nawuri (Interview with Matthew Sariba Yane, Kitari, December 14, 2022). In short, the ritual performances associated with the *chankpana* cult were utilised as psychological devices for post-conflict rebuilding in Kpandai and its environs in the present-day Kpandai District.

Plate 3: Ritual Performances of the Chankpana Devotees (Alijii)

Source: Authors' Field Research, 2022

The Youth and Peacebuilding

The concept “peacebuilding” has received enormous attention in scholarship. This study does not seek to wade into the historicity and philosophical treatises on peacebuilding. Suffice it, however, to take a cursory look at the concept. In a report in 1992, the UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali described the concept “peacebuilding as activity embracing a plethora of issues that seek to establish lasting peace” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). According to him:

The concept of peacebuilding as the construction of a new environment should be viewed as the counterpart of democracy, which seeks to prevent the breakdown of peaceful conditions. When conflicts break out, mutually reinforcing efforts at peacemaking and peacekeeping comes into play. Once these have achieved their status, only sustained cooperative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems can place an achieved peace on a durable foundation. Preventive diplomacy is to avoid crisis, post-conflict peacebuilding is to prevent recurrence (Boutros-Ghali, 1992: 33)

In general, the overriding objective of peacebuilding is to “address the root causes and effects of conflicts by restoring broken relationships, promoting reconciliation, institution-building and political reform, as well as facilitating economic transformation” (Adjei, 2016: 76). It is within this general scope and objective of peacebuilding that the discussion of the NPA’s use of social resources for post-conflict rebuilding in the Kpandai District is contextualised in this study. Driven by its desire to promote peace in Kpandai and its environs, the NPA made provision in its constitution for the establishment of bodies or committees for that purpose. In Article 3(13) of the NPA Constitution, the NPA seeks “to serve as a

mediation body and provide mediation services to resolve misunderstandings and disputes among members and Nawuris in general.” To this end, the NPA Constitution (2019) made provision for a standing committee to be known as “peace and dispute resolution committee.” The provisions of the NPA Constitution (2019) spell out the functions of the Peace and Dispute Resolution Committee as follows:

- 1) Intermediation and dialogue; 2) Working hand in hand with opinion leaders, chiefs and all stakeholders to foster unity between among factions; 3) Prevention of dispute; 4) Peaceful coexistence of Nawuris; 5) Come out with a roadmap of conflict & land resolutions (NPA Constitution, Article 6(D1), 2019).

Plausible as the NPA’s ambience towards peace is, its peace operations are yet to bear fruits. Hence, in practice, little is known of the NPA’s operationalisation of its peacebuilding objectives. This is partly due to the ingrained nature of the disputes in Nawuri society and partly due to the fact that the disputes are alarmingly difficult to be resolved in a short period of time. As the current NPA Chairman, Mr. Vincent Nyifene put it:

Some of the disputes among the Nawuri communities have lingered for a long time. The dispute over the Nawuriwura (paramount chief) of the Nawuri existed since the 1980s, about eight years before the Nawuri-Gonja conflict in 1991. Many organizations and NGOs, including WANEP, tried unsuccessfully to resolve the dispute between Nana Bristiam Okore Atorsah I of Kpandai and Nana Abugaba of Nkanchina. The dispute transcends beyond the individuals to encapsulate their community members. In addition, other Nawuri communities have also taken sides in the dispute. Hence, to resolve a dispute of this enormity requires that

NPA proceeds cautiously. NPA is breaking grounds, and would surely work assiduously to resolve the dispute peacefully and amicably (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule, November 19, 2022).

In terms of boundary disputes between Kpandai and Balai on the one hand, and between Kpandai and Nkanchina on the other, NPA has facilitated a number of engagements. Meetings have been held with these communities, leading to an unprecedented decision by them to resolve their boundary disputes amicably (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule, November 19, 2022).

In various communities, some NPA members have worked as peace ambassadors. Others have also used the media space in Kpandai to educate the Nawuri and other ethnic groups in the Kpandai District on the plausibility and imperativeness of peace and peacebuilding (Mbowura, 2022). According to Mbowura (2022: 770), evidence abound to show that:

NPA women such as Madam Cynthia Okumasi, Madam Dorcas Anawusah and Madam Celestina Serwaa Asunke, Madam Stella Amoani, Madam Francesca Ama Attah, among others, have made several overtures on local radio FM stations in Kpandai concerning peace and peace-building structures, modalities and post-conflict rebuilding mechanisms. These women took their peace-building campaign beyond the corridors of the FM stations to the various Nawuri communities. They were said to have made periodic visits to the Nawuri settlements where they interacted with the youths about peace, unity and development in Nawuriland.

Beyond the operationalisation of peacebuilding mechanisms to solve internal disputes among the Nawuri, the NPA has worked closely with chiefs, other ethnic groups and government bodies at national and local levels to promote peace in the Kpandai District as a whole. For instance, the NPA took measures to ensure that a group of Konkomba youth in the Kpandai District that sought to organise a cultural dance in Kpandai respected Nawuri tradition in the interest of peace. Instead of seeking permission from the Kpandaiwura (the overlord of Kpandai), the Konkomba group sought

permission from the Konkomba chief of Kpandai, a chief of the Konkomba settler community in Kpandai (NPA petition, June 23, 2022). Though the action of the Konkomba group could have been an oversight and unintended to belittle Nawuri tradition and the office of the Kpandaiwura, unscrupulous people, perhaps 'doyens of anarchy', began to give it a spin – a dangerous situation that would have caused a 'cultural antagonism' between the Nawuri and the Konkomba. In social spaces, interactions began to focus on the forthcoming Konkomba cultural dance and the potential danger the spin on the group's non-recognition of the Kpandaiwura could have on peace in Kpandai (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule, November 19, 2022). As a proto-peacebuilding organisation, NPA saw the imperativeness in petitioning the Kpandai District Security Committee (DISEC) to suspend the intended Konkomba cultural dance to allow for proper consultations in the interest of peace (NPA petition, June 23, 2022). Despite the good intentions of the NPA, its petition was perhaps taken out of context to mean Nawuri attempts to stampede a 'harmless' cultural display of the Konkomba in Kpandai. As a result, NPA's petition stimulated Konkomba anger, leading to the KOYA Chapter in Kpandai petitioning the Northern Regional Security Council (KOYA petition, dated June 22, 2022). Central to the KOYA petition were the overt and covert threats to peace it posed. Worried about the dimension of the reaction of KOYA, the NPA petitioned the Minister for National Security to take immediate steps to pre-empt any disturbances in Kpandai, and demanded that a number of security measures should be put in place (NPA petition to National Security, dated July 12, 2022: 3-4). Nothing has been heard about the results of the NPA petition. Nonetheless, the actions of the NPA, as shown by its posture in the petitions, indicated the NPA's uncompromising desire for peace, both in theory and in practice.

The NPA and Social Mobilization

The NPA has become a force for the mobilisation of social/community resources, a catalyst for youth participation in community-driven development initiatives in the post-conflict rebuilding schemes of the Nawuri. Any satisfactory study of the NPA as a catalyst for social mobilisation must necessarily examine its role in social gatherings and recreational activities among the Nawuri. The NPA has become a reference point for the mobilisation of the Nawuri in the various Nawuri communities for social gathering and feasting. Hence, NPA has stimulated the participation of groups and individuals in Nawuri gatherings and

social activities than had been the case prior to its existence. Through these mechanisms, the NPA succeeded in invoking the feelings of communal exuberance, togetherness and social integration – strong social pillars for post-conflict reconstruction and rebuilding schemes (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule. November 19, 2022).

In addition, local chapters of the NPA in the various Nawuri communities engineered communal labour to mobilise local resources and free labour to work on projects for the benefit of the communities and individuals (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule. November 19, 2022). On the first day or a day before every homecoming festivity, the NPA mobilised the youth to clean the streets of Kpandai and other principal areas (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule. November 19, 2022). However, it should be mentioned that the NPA's initiative in a plantation project has failed, as the coconuts planted were swept away by bushfires. Nonetheless, the NPA is exploring other areas of mobilising the youth for the development of Kpandai and its environs (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule. November 19, 2022). From the above, it is logical to conclude that the social activities of the NPA are key indicators of the mobilisation of social support schemes for post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society in the Kpandai District in Northern Ghana.

The NPA and Nawuri Identity

The NPA has become a driving force of Nawuri consciousness and Nawuri identity. Its annual rituals are sprinkled with activities that seek to promote Nawuri identity. From the ritualisation of the land to the cultural displays that permeated the homecoming programmes, the NPA promoted Nawuri rituals and cultural identity. Furthermore, the spirit of 'we-feeling' and euphoria that characterised the activities of the NPA have stimulated a desire among the Nawuri to preserve their ethnic and cultural identity (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule. November 19, 2022). As one of the two ethnic groups in the Northern Region with a cultural affinity with Southern Ghana, the cultural and linguistic identity of the Nawuri have been overshadowed, if not inundated, by those of the other ethnic groups in the region. Consequently, Nawuri cultural, ritual and linguistic identity waned considerably in the face of the cataclysmal forces of the cultures, linguistics and rituals of other ethnic groups in the Northern Region (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene,

Kabonwule. November 19, 2022). However, since the emergence of the NPA in the social space in Kpandai and its environs, Nawurism was popularized, an ideology that promoted Nawuri identity, which revolved around the use of psychosocial devices for post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society (Interview with Matthew Sariba Yane, Kitari. December 14, 2022).

Beyond the ritual and cultural identity, the NPA has promoted the ethnic identity of the Nawuri in its homecoming programmes and other programmes. By advertising and streaming its activities on various social media networks, the NPA contributed in popularising Nawuri identity in local and international spaces. Furthermore, by collaborating with other Guan groups such as Nchumuru, Krachi, among others, to contribute resource persons for the Asen Kpenya (a radio programme on GTV in Guan) to discuss issues relating to the Guan groups and to educate them, the NPA helped to put Nawuri identity beyond the local space in Kpandai and its environs (Interview with Matthew Sariba Yane, Kitari. December 14, 2022).

Linguistically, the NPA has stimulated the unrestricted desire of the Nawuri youth to learn and express themselves impeccably in the Nawuri dialect. Its competition in Nawuri idioms during the homecoming festivities has pushed Nawuri youth, or at least participants in the competition, to learn to express themselves in Nawuri impeccably, something that appeared to be an impossibility in the past (Interview with Matthew Sariba Yane, Kitari. December 14, 2022). Similarly, its odanche (beauty pageant) event and other events have laid the foundation for participants to be able to pristinely express themselves in Nawuri without borrowed words in English and other Ghanaian languages. All these have contributed in promoting and/or preserving the linguistic identity of the Nawuri (Interview with NPA Chairman, Vincent Nyifene, Kabonwule. November 19, 2022). These devices were some of the key psychosocial devices that the NPA used and continues to use in post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society in Kpandai in the Northern Region.

Conclusion

This paper examined the psychosocial devices used by the NPA for post-conflict rebuilding in Kpandai and its environs in the Kpandai District. The NPA used a mixture of psychological (ritual) and social devices as tools for post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society. Ritual performances connected with the Nawuri land, as well as ritual performances connected with the chankpana cult, were key psychological devices that were used by

the NPA to re-engineer Nawuri society in the post-conflict era. Furthermore, the NPA's homecoming activities have triggered an indefatigable craze among the Nawuri youth to participate in Nawuri cultural and ritual practices that they had hitherto frowned upon due to westernisation and globalisation. Besides, the NPA did not only seek to ensure peace and unity among the Nawuri, it also made its voices vociferous in matters that were likely to affect the peace of the Kpandai District in general. Its participation in peacebuilding initiatives in Kpandai and its environs has made the NPA a key stakeholder in peacebuilding in the Kpandai District. In addition, the NPA has carried out programmes that promoted Nawuri cultural, linguistic and ritual identity within local and international spaces. It also served as a fecundity for social mobilization by networking the Nawuri youth and mobilising them to undertake development projects. In short, the NPA has become a force for peace, a catalyst for youth participation in community development and issues, and a driving force for Nawuri consciousness. Its influence in the social space in the Kpandai District revolved around the use of psychosocial factors for the post-conflict rebuilding of Nawuri society.

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