Muslims and Party Politics in Ghana: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Analysis

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Abstract

The political participation of Muslims has been dynamic across time and space. While there exist several studies on Islam and politics in Africa and across the globe, studies that address the participation of Muslims in Ghanaian politics remain scant. Significantly, the current discourse examines the involvement of Muslims in politics by primarily focusing on the involvement of Muslims in Ghanaian politics. Using a qualitative approach, we have drawn data from a compendium of secondary sources to develop a narrative review that is consistent with the focus of the study. From our findings, it was revealed that while Muslim participation at earlier times of Ghanaian politics could be termed as low, the Fourth Republic has witnessed a relative increase in the participation of Muslims. Specifically, in the Fourth Republic, more Muslims and/or people of Northern descent have received valuable appointment within governments of the two major parties in the country. However, it appears the number of Muslims within the informal sector of politics outweighs that of their counterparts in the formal and/or public political offices in contemporary times; in important portfolios such as the ministries, council of state, parliament and the judiciary, their numbers are unsatisfactory. This occurrence has been orchestrated by a myriad of challenges that hinder their participation. Among other things, it was concluded that to effectively improve upon the active participation of Muslims in politics, there need to be a framework for addressing the status of Muslims that militate against their contributions to political activities in Ghana.

Keywords: *Muslim, party politics, political participation, Ghana, Islam.*

Introduction

Islam impacts politics globally. Indeed, international politics cannot comprehensively flourish without making room to accommodate and relate to Islam. Islamic history has been described as a "complex cultural synthesis centered

in a distinctive religious faith and necessarily set in the framework of a continuing political life" (Denny, 1973, p. 130). Islam is perceived not just as a religion but a political and ideological force. Africa had its first contact with Islam in the 8th century. Eventually, through trade, it spread to various parts of the continent.

Ghana's immediate post-independent political climate till date has been filled with a series of political events and factors that shape the extent and nature of citizens' participation. For instance, in situations where the majority of Ghanaian citizens were dissatisfied with the social and economic policies of the government, the level of participation has been low (Ninsin, 1993).

Direct participation of Muslims in Ghanaian politics occurred in 1953 when the country had attained internal autonomy from the colonialists (Kobo, 2010). This was marked by an important development since Muslims normally did not actively participate in politics prior to this. According to Price (1954, p. 108), "Islam which came into prominence on the political scene on 19 September 1953 is a symbol which seems to have taken the rest of the country by surprise, for little attention was paid before that time to the political role of the Muslims". For the first time, Muslims did not only participate in Municipal council elections of 1953, but eventually formed a political party, the Muslim Association Party (M.A.P) in same year (Kobo, 2010).

The direct involvement of Muslims in the country's politics raised lots of controversies that continue to persist till date. The literature argues that while the northern part of Ghana maintained the "underdeveloped" backyard of contemporary Ghana, the change from a colonial to a postcolonial viewpoint further underscored the Muslim minority's "foreign" position in the country (Weiss, 2008). Statistics indicate that as at 2010, Muslims contributed to about 17.6% of Ghana's population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2011; Shiraz, 2015). Muslims in Ghana are depicted as minority who have little political and economic influence at the national level (Weiss, 2008). Significantly, it has been reported that while the Muslim community in Ghana envisions and represents itself as an oppressed minority, non-Muslim observers are increasingly concerned about the potential for Muslims to become radicalized (Weiss, 2008). Political activities of the Muslims were therefore a development that marked a unique trend in Ghana's politics.

Several studies exist on the development of Islam and politics in Africa. That notwithstanding, studies that address the involvement of Muslims in Ghanaian politics remain scant. At the end of this discourse, we hope to add to the data on Muslims and politics by focusing primarily on the involvement of Muslims in Ghanaian politics and how same has shaped the political landscape of Ghana.

Also, attention has been paid to the dynamism of Muslims and party politics in Ghana's fourth republic.

The paper attempts to do an in-depth study on these issues. It traces briefly the history of Islam in Africa and modern Ghana in particular. It then examines the involvement of Muslims in politics, political party affiliations and voting patterns within Zongo[1] communities and the challenges of Muslim participation in party politics since the precolonial era. Significantly, the study is guided by the following research questions: What triggered Muslims' engagement in Ghana's politics? How did their involvement impact the political landscape? And what were some of the challenges thereof?

Theorization

Several theories have been adopted to explain political participation across the world. Importantly, the theories of political participation, politics, and religion are used to elucidate the political participation of Muslims in Ghana.

Issues in Political Participation

Participation in politics is essential to democracy and good governance (Dahl, 1971; Dowse and Hughes, 1979; Almond and Verba, 1963). It is a major means by which citizens take part in how their affairs are managed and hold their leaders accountable (Warren, 2002). According to Dowse and Hughes (1979), political participation allows citizens to take part in the selection of rulers and (directly or indirectly) in the creation of public policy. The various ways by which citizens participate can be expressed through voting, seeking information, discussions and contributing financially, attending meetings, holding membership of a political party and competing for public and party office (Riley et al., 2010; Munroe, 2002; Verba et al., 1965).

Participation in politics is considered a virtue and a sense of civic responsibility, especially in democracies. It constitutes the chief means by which citizens affect the social institutions that shape their lives. Through participation,

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[1]Both Schildkrout (1978) and Newman (2007) argue that Zongo is used to mean "traveler's camp" or "stop-over" in Hausa and was used by British Colonial Officers to define the areas in which Muslims lived. Williamson (2014) argue that traditionally, the residents of these settlements were Muslims traveling south from Northern Territories either for economic purposes or as hired warriors. Today, Zongos have become a vast network of settlements, and every urban center in Ghana has at least one Zongo. Such communities in Accra include Nima, Madina Zongo, Shukura Zongo, and Fadama in Accra. Those in Kumase include Sawaba, Sabon Zongo and Mossi Zongo."

citizens can exercise control over the institution of the state and the distribution of resources (Ayee, 1991). Participation, therefore, leads to the development of human capabilities, effective decision making and actions. Thus, the maximum utilization of human resources of any political system largely depends on citizen's participation in governance (Ayee, 1991). Participation is a kind of local autonomy that allows for the discovery of different options of exercising choices to be able to manage one's affairs (Ayee, 1991).

The motives or reasons for participation vary. They are largely rational and calculative and cut across economic, sociological, and psychological spheres. Psychologically, participation is driven by the urge to seek gratification, approval of others, and feeling of power and self-worth. Sociologically, participation is influenced by factors such as status, religion, gender, and prestige. Economically, participation is largely the desire for material wellbeing (Dowse & Hughes, 1979). In the case of Muslims, their political participation has been largely influenced by sociological spheres. To a larger extent, religion has played a central role in their political activities in Ghana (Price, 1954).

Citizens' participation in politics is not homogenous. Participation, according to Dowse and Hughes (1979, p. 290) manifests in "many different ways, with different degree of emotional involvement and at different levels of the system". Significantly, the variations in the degree of participation are related to the type of society. Different social settings present individuals with different opportunities for political participation and mold the attitudes of individuals towards politics (Dowse & Hughes, 1979; Almond & Verba, 1963).

Among the various political settings, Almond and Verba (1963) assert that it is in democracies that the role of citizens as participants is significant. Depending on the political system, therefore, participation could be high or low (Dowse & Hughes, 1979; Almond & Verba, 1963). In many instances, people fail to participate due to indifference, exclusion, or incapability. Among these are the uneducated, the inarticulate, the closed-minded, and the isolated (Almond & Verba, 1963; Shiraz, 2015). Other factors that shape participation include time, energy, money and the negative perception of politics as a corrupt and dirty game (Shiraz, 2015).

Similarly, the extent and nature of involvement in politics are also influenced by factors such as social status and education. For instance, whereas people with status within the society are at the political center, most people with lower social status are at the periphery (Dowse & Hughes, 1979). Also, the feeling of powerlessness, isolation, and dissatisfaction with the way one is treated by the political system affects the nature of political participation (Pobee, 1991).

Studies have revealed that when people are not satisfied and are convinced that their lives are in jeopardy, they tend to be active participants in politics (Donovan, 1980). Thus, important, direct, and particular events may mobilize and trigger relatively passive people to participate. The ideal political system is considered the one in which the individual feels obliged to participate, thinks he can participate, and also know how to participate (Almond & Verba, 1963).

In Ghana, there has been varied degrees of political participation. Essentially, the period before the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) and the Fourth Republic which was characterized by instability, corruption, economic mismanagement and human rights violation created an atmosphere of cynicism, alienation and apathy (Dumbe, 2013). The justification and subsequent effort of the PNDC regime to strengthen participation saw the creation of a "new and more democratic base" that resulted in the concept of district assembly characterized by popular election (Ninsin, 1993). This subsequently paved the way for the adoption of democracy ushering in the Fourth Republic.

Participation in Ghanaian politics, both at the local and national level, hinged largely on personalities (UNDP, 2013). Consequently, people have relied on symbolism, sentimental and metaphysical influences to guide their participation. According to UNDP (2013), another factor that has significantly shaped citizen's involvement in national politics is economic gains.

Concerning the nature of participation in Ghana's politics, it has been observed that participation has been shaped by the "prevalence of a definite non-confrontational, submissive and compliant attitude towards authority" (UNDP, 2013). This is confirmed by the situation where most of the people are reluctant to "publicly question, or diverge from an official standpoint" (UNDP, 2013). In addition to this are the factors of traditional customary practices and the legacy of colonialism. The former frowned upon confronting legitimate authority whilst the latter was an authoritarian system that did not breed a democratic culture. The colonial system, heightened and encouraged the undemocratic aspect of the traditional system.

Politics-Religion Interface

Politics

Aristotle has long described the nature of man as political. Thus, politics is inherent to man and man must necessarily thrive within a political community; it is by politics that man can attain the highest good or self-sufficiency. Man, when perfected, according to Aristotle is the best of animals, but when separated from

law and justice, is the worst of all (Strike, 1991). The inherent nature of politics in man and the importance of collective life in ensuring progress has received wider acceptance among scholars. Politics is man's relationship at the aggregate level. It concerns collectivity rather than individual with the aim of ensuring self-sufficiency.

Politics incorporates all of the activities or decisions that affect the lives of people within every society. These include acts of organizing, planning, setting rules, and standards that determine how people relate to one another. It also includes how resources are allocated among competing needs within society (Leftwich & Callinicos, 2004). Politics thus permeates all facets of society. Political scientists are inclined to give special attention to the activities of government and the state and its institutions. Accordingly, issues of public nature, the state, its institutions and the government have become the central focus and concern of politics and political scientists.

Of special concern is how public concerns, needs and interests, reach the government and how state resources are used to address same concerns. It deals essentially with regulations, laws, and justice which are required not just to perfect man but establish a stable order in which progress is possible. The objective of politics, therefore, is to efficiently manage a state or political community to ensure the preservation and safety of lives, peace, prosperity, protection of rights and liberties, and to ensure improvement or progress in the lives of the citizens including their morals. To this end, there is an authority structure and power structure as well as employed methods and strategies to guide the formulation and implementation of policies. Equally significant is how various groups including religious groups and civil society organizations influence the decision-making process, and how in turn, the state and government influence such groups.

Religion

Throughout recorded history, evidence of the existence and functioning of religion has been established. Religion has played a pivotal role in influencing, determining and shaping the behavior of citizens. At the core of religion is a collection of belief and cultural systems that establish perspectives of life to link humanity to spirituality. Religion is accredited with giving its members the feeling of a secure and safe life, hope, or something to look up to. According to Durant and Durant (1968), "to the unhappy, the suffering, the bereaved, the old, it has brought supernatural comfort". Religion is also noted to instill discipline in the youth and confer "meaning and dignity" on the oppressed (Durant & Durant, 1968).

Scholars are of the view that religion regulates societies. According to Napoleon, religion "has kept the poor from murdering the rich" (Durant & Durant, 1968). This perhaps is due to the supernatural hope it offers. Despite the existence of religion, it must be pointed out that, evil and immoral acts have been recorded throughout human history. These include; robbery, violence, greed, dishonesty, war and economic devastation among others. It is however argued that the situation would have been worse without the regulative effect of religious ethics, "priestly exhortation, calming and unifying rituals" (Durant & Durant, 1968).

It is worth pointing out that not everything about religion has been rosy. It has been used at one time or the other for self-serving ends such as the manipulation and control of other people, and advancing the commercial and political interest of groups, individuals, and states. The church at a point in history was managed by men who often proved unfair, corruptible, or extravagant (Durant & Durant, 1968). Consequently, whilst preaching peace, the church has also fueled religious wars.

Politics and Religion

Politics and religion have blended on several occasions. First, both create or establish order and aim for a life worth living. They both promise the fulfillment of expectations; the leaders of both realms use doctrines to justify actions and to cement link to their organizations. These doctrines, in both cases, are vague and subject to different interpretations (Durant & Durant, 1968). Indeed, the view that religion is above the state is not just theoretical; it is one that has found expression in practical politics.

The subjugation of the state to religion could not endure forever. The situation was reversed as the church later became the political tool of the rulers or kings who were ordering the Pope. This was attributed mainly to religious men falling or slouching to fraud and corruption. The relationship of subjugation of religion to politics or state was replaced with secular institutions. Thereafter, more efforts were directed toward the separation of politics from religion.

The concern was with the state staying away from religious supports. State laws thus, became the command of men, with reason and persuasion becoming central to education and civilization rather than religion. The power of the law and government replaced morality and faith in ensuring stability. Currently, the trend is increasingly to split-up government or state from religion. This is not actually to renounce religion. Even in the modern state, religion continues to play a significant role in keeping social order.

Methodology

The methodological approach adopted for this study was purely qualitative. The qualitative data was obtained from a compendium of secondary sources. Significantly, the current study used a narrative review approach to discuss the issues surrounding Muslims and political participation in Ghana. The researchers conducted a systematic search in various databases related to the development of Muslim political participation in Africa. We placed emphasis on journal materials that discuss Muslim participation in Ghana's Fourth Republic.

The various online databases consulted were google scholar, web of Science, Elsevier, Jstor, Brill, Wiley, African Online Journals, Taylor and Francis and Emerald Insight. The material searches were done under the following keywords: "history of Islam in Africa and Ghana", "political participation of Muslims in Africa and Ghana", the role of Muslims in Ghanaian Politics", "the contribution of Muslim to Ghana's Fourth Republic" and "Challenges of Muslims in Ghanaian politics".

The results of the searches presented 2070 articles from the various databases. Out of these, 50 were selected at the expense of the others after a skim through the abstracts. The materials selected were in line with discussions on the history of Muslims in Ghana, their political participation, their role in Ghanaian politics and challenges emanating from their participation through time. The criteria for selecting a material was dependent on its publication in English with discussions in line with the objects of the study. As religion is a sensitive subject, all materials that presented biased and discriminatory information were ignored during the selection process.

Aside from journal articles, information was gathered from valuable books and book chapters in line with the aim of the study. Also, the references of selected materials were reviewed to identify other studies worthy of contact. The results of findings from the various sources were analyzed thematically to develop a narrative synthesis that is consistent with the focus of the study. Significantly, earlier and more recent scholarships have been synthesized to corroborate each other.

Islam in Africa and Ghana

Followers of the Prophet Muhammad (570 – 632) can be found across all continents of the world with the largest concentrations in the Middle East where, Islam originated (Hiskett, 1984). In the year 615 BC, Africa received over eighty Muslim men and women who were escaping persecution in Mecca (Hiskett, 1984;

Drekte, 1968). Through diplomacy, Muhammad (SAW) wrote letters inviting the rulers of Egypt, Yemen, Persia, and the Roman governor of Palestine to accept Islam. However, after the demise of the Prophet, Muslim troops entered Egypt and swept through North Africa through conquests and moved down to the ancient Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhai. The arrival of Islam in pre-colonial Gold Coast was sanctioned through the efforts of Muslim traders (nomadic groups) and itinerant clerics (Hiskett, 1984; Silverman & Owusu-Ansah, 1989).

Pre-colonial Gold Coast had earlier contacts with Islam during the 14th and 15th centuries through the activities of Muslim traders from the Upper Niger region known as Wangara (Yarse or Dyula) (Levitzion, 1968; Silverman & Owusu-Ansah, 1989). These traders became increasingly involved in the Middle Volta Basin gold and kola trade. Significantly, Muslim merchants set up separate quarters in the then Asante capital of Bono-Manso c.1723 (Levitzion, 1968). The Wangara managed to spread Islam in the interior and extended their trade routes southward in search of new and richer sources of gold.

Islam was firmly established in Ghana by the arrival, later, of Muslims from Hausa Land. The Kingdoms of Dagbon (14th Century), Gonja (17th Century), and Asante (18th Century) all had interaction with Islam and Muslims in one way or the other. Consequently, Muslim settlements were established in coastal towns and villages in the late nineteenth century. In some cities such as Accra, some local inhabitants converted to Islam (Weiss, 2008). In the case of Dagbon, Toha Zie (The red hunter) and his children came into contact with Muslims in Mali and Gurma before the grandson Gbewah set up the first capital at Pusiga (Seebaway, 2011, p. 43).

Chieftaincy institution played a significant role in the spread of Islam. To have a greater political impact, Muslim Chiefs came together in the late 1950s to form the council of Muslim chiefs in Accra (Weiss, 2008). Unlike in the North and Asante, Muslims in the coastal areas were unable to play significant roles in the establishment of traditional institutions. Rather, they isolated themselves, adopted their unique ways of doing things and settled separately from the local people (Pellow, 1984). "Once identified as a Muslim area, no non-Muslim were supposed to live there" (Pellow, 1984).

The advent of colonialism generally affected and destabilized the traditional state of equilibrium that had been established between Muslims and the local authorities, especially in Asante and the Northern part of the country. It took away the prestigious services that Muslims were rendering to traditional authorities such as scribes, accountants and record keepers among others. These functions were

taken over by colonial educated elites and missionaries who introduced western secular education (Austin, 1964).

Direct Involvement of Muslims in Ghanaian Politics

Across the globe, the political participation of Muslims were triggered by a myriad of forces. Beginning as smaller organizations, various conditions influenced the formation of Muslim political parties. In Britain for instance, the educational needs of young Muslims influenced the formation of Muslim organizations (Nielsen, 2010). Most of these organizations were consolidated into the establishment of the Islamic Party of Britain in 1992 (Nielsen, 2010). Despite their formation of political parties, the involvement of Muslims in the formal politics of France, Germany, Netherlands and the United States of America remains low (Haddad & Ricks, 2010; Cesari, 2014; Cinalli & Giugni, 2016).

In Ghana, the formation of the Gold Coast Muslim Association (GCMA) in 1932 paved way for the active and direct participation of Muslims in Ghanaian politics (Price, 1954; Pobee, 1991). The GCMA, a nonpolitical association was formed to cater for the welfare, education and general development of the Muslim immigrant community. However, it turned political in 1939 as it became necessary to effectively address the interest of Muslim immigrants. In 1939, the Gold Coast Muslim Association first supported the Mambii (indigenes) party in the Accra Municipal election (Price, 1954). This happened when Muslims felt that there had been unfair distribution of building materials following the damage caused by a severe earthquake in Accra in 1939. In 1942, the GCMA also supported the Accra lawyer, former communist, Pan Africanist and founding member of the West African Youth League, Bankole Awoonor-Renner, who had converted to Islam in about 1940 (Weiss, 2008).

The literature notes that Muslims became active participants of national politics to realize their objective of improving their condition (Price, 1954). Significantly, Pobee (1991) asserts that the economic factor and discrimination against Muslims pushed them to directly engage in national politics. Though they turned to politics, Muslims were not so much concerned with the politics which led them to decision making positions. Rather, they were interested in aspects that paved way for their voices to be heard (Pobee, 1991). The GCMA went into alliance with political parties such as the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), and the Mumbai party at separate times, to pursue its objectives. However, the Muslim association faced an organizational crisis that created disunity and division among its rank and file. Consequently, it

split into two along the lines of the youth and elders. The youth subsequently formed the Muslim Youth Congress (MYC) and aligned themselves with the CPP. The elders of the GCMA, however, adopted an anti-CPP stance.

In 1953, a turn of events in the political activities of the GCMA occurred when it embarked on independent political activity. For the first time, it presented candidates for the municipal elections of 1953 in Accra and Kumase (Kobo, 2010). In 1954, the GCMA transformed into a political party with the name Muslim Association Party (MAP) and maintained its anti-CPP stance (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002). The creation of the Muslims Association Party (MAP) was a move by some influential Muslims who were active in politics to oppose the Convention People's Party (CPP), especially in the Gold Coast and Ashanti colonies (Weiss, 2008). It declared its objectives to side with the aged and traditional authority and to ensure the recognition of Muslims' interest in the country (Austin, 1964).

The formation of MAP and its participation in the municipal elections were made possible by the extension of franchise to the immigrant Muslim communities (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002; Kobo, 2010). To obtain a franchise, a Muslim had to be settled in the country for two or three generations and own a property in the country (Price, 1954). The "law as at that time took no cognizance of foreignness. If a person is a British subject, provided he or she has fulfilled the other qualifications he belongs to the Gold Coast…" (Price, 1954). Importantly, the extension of the franchise was a move in the right direction since most immigrants had vested interests in the country.

Numerous challenges confronted Muslims as they engaged actively and directly in the politics of the country. Religion had featured prominently in the political activities of Muslims in the country (Price, 1954; Austin, 1964; Pobee, 1991). Austin (1964) noted that "in the Zongo areas of the southern towns where Muslim community was strongly grouped, the rallying cry of Islam was used with great effort to enlist support on behalf of a particular candidate". Consequently, the MAP was highly sectarian and fell short of being a national party.

Also, the unity of the Muslims was a challenge. Price (1954) observed that Muslims were divided along ethnic lines and age. There was no one unifying body but multiple contested councils, each representing a specific segment of the Muslim population and typically reflecting either ethnic or factional divisions (Weiss, 2008). As a result, not all Muslims supported MAP. Also, the division was along the lines of French-speaking Zambrama people and the Hausa in Kumase (Austin, 1964).

Furthermore, a general resentment arose from non-Muslims against the involvement of Muslims in politics. The Muslims, who were predominantly immigrants from neighboring West African countries, were generally perceived as aliens or foreigners by some of the locals. As such, they were thought of as having no right to engage in the local politics of the country. In the South, Muslims were regarded as "migrants" and as such could and did not have any political influence (Weiss, 2008). The consequences thereof were a reaction on the part of the Muslims in the form of radicalism (Price, 1954). The political fortune of MAP was seriously affected. Consequently, they lost heavily in the June 1954 elections, even in Muslim communities across the country. Austin (1964) also observed that the activities of MAP were not widespread. Their leaders were also handicapped by their foreign origin and their inadequate grasp of the English language, the official language of communication in the country. As a result, the MAP was compelled to accept outside leaders like Bankole Renner, a former CPP leader, and Kobina Kessie.

The sectarian politics, divisions, and radicalism associated with Muslim politics were considered undesirable. The situation was described by Austin (1964) as the "socialist pre-requisite of the legislation necessary to outlaw parties based on religion, tribalism and racialism". The overriding objective of the then CPP government led by Nkrumah was to establish one nation out of the different ethnicities. Besides, MAP had officially declared itself as an opposition party to the government of Nkrumah. The Kumase branch chairman of MAP for example was on record to have written to the Ashanti pioneer in January 1954 that "a true Muslim can never be friends with CPP. Muslim Association Party (MAP) is prepared to hold the devil by the throat until everybody is free in the country" (Austin, 1964, p. 59).

The anti-CPP stance of MAP attracted a reaction from the CPP government which subsequently introduced the Deportation and Detention Acts (Weiss, 2008; Kobo, 2010). These Acts made it possible to deport and detain some leaders of MAP. Weiss (2008) reveals that the Deportation Act of 1957 caused the deportation of two key members of the MAP; Alhaji Ahmad Baba and Alhaji Uthman Ladan, to Kano in Nigeria. Weiss further states that women also fell victim of the *Deportation Act*. For instance, Madam Goma, who was a petty trader in a Zongo in Kumase and the heads of the Gao (i.e., Songhay) and Mossi

communities in Kumase, Amadu Gao and Amadu Mossi, were deported in addition to several others (Kobo, 2010).[2]

The ultimate and last move that brought about the demise of MAP was the passage of the *Avoidance of Discrimination Act of 1957* by the CPP dominated legislature. In 1954, in the legislature, there were 72 against 14 votes, banning the formation of political parties along religious lines. MAP thus ceased to exist, but Muslim political activities continued. Many Muslims aligned with the Congress Party on 3rd November, 1954 (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002; Hanretta, 2011).

In the post-Nkrumah era, Muslims were split between the two major parties; the Progress Party (PP) led by Busia and the National Alliance of Liberals led by K.A Gbedemah. The political activities of Muslims during this period made interesting revelations. The immigrant Muslim community always identified with the ruling party (Weiss, 2008). This behavior of the immigrant Muslims was attributed to the "alien status" associated with them (Weiss, 2008). The identification with the ruling government found expression through the Imams or the leadership of the Muslims. It has been reported that during the Acheampong regime, Imams openly identified with Acheampong and his union government's idea (Pobee, 1991). Muslim leaders, not only gave their support but justified the verses of the Qur'an to support the idea of the union government. The idea of creating a union government with the Acheampong regime was supported by some Muslim Chiefs and the Ghana Muslim Representative Council (GMRC).

The general assessment of Muslims' involvement in the national politics of the country is that, rather than advancing their interest, politics has had a damaging effect on them. Accordingly, the chiefs, elders and leaders of the Muslim community organized a press conference to eschew party politics (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002; Hanretta, 2015). They reemphasized their support for the union government to devoid themselves of political parties (Ahmed-Rufai, 2002; Hanretta, 2015). However, it was noted that as the Union Government's concept was not an idea that was accepted by all, and as Acheampong himself did not tolerate any criticism of the government, it became difficult for anyone associated with it to claim a non-partisan status. Notwithstanding the stance of Muslim leaders to eschew party politics, politics and party-political activities continued to reflect in all Muslim organizations. Organizations such as the Muslim Council and Muslim Scout Association were all infiltrated by political party officials and activities.

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[2] Amadu Mossi was the Mossi Chief of Kumase and Amadu Gao was the Chief of Malians in Kumase.

Muslims and Party Politics in the Fourth Republic

As it stands, it will be difficult to claim that any particular party is for or against Muslims. Starting from the early days of political party formation, the major political traditions, the United Party (UP) and the CPP both had Muslims playing leading roles. Importantly, Muslims have actively participated in the politics of the Fourth republic in diverse ways. Political parties in Ghana, especially, the two major parties, New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC), have made conscious efforts to influence and attract a significant number of votes from Zongo communities. Weiss (2008) argues that Muslim voters gained the attention of the NPP and the NDC in the 2000 and 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections.

Globally, Muslims always align themselves with political parties that make policies to favour them (Drekte, 1968; Nielson, 2010; Al-Momani et al., 2010). In France and Britain, the literature argues that during the 1990s, Muslims saw conservative governments as obstacles to their involvement in politics (Nielson, 2010). Concerning Britain, Muslims have regarded the administration and policies of the Labour government as much friendlier (Nielson, 2010). In Australia too, earlier findings suggest that Muslims mostly vote for the Labor Party –whose policy favour migrant Muslims in the country (Al-Momani et al., 2010).

Similarly, it appears that Zongo communities (particularly those in Accra and Kumase)[3] are strongholds of the NDC (Drekte, 1968). This is confirmed by the number of votes they accrue during general elections. A number of reasons have been identified to explain the tendency above. There has been a growing anti-NPP sentiments stemming from the *Alien's Compliance Order of 1960,* which was implemented by the then Prime Minister; Professor Kofi Abrefa Busia and his Progress Party (PP) Administration. This had detrimental effects on non-indigenous Muslims. During the 2000 election, the NDC blamed the NPP for being anti-Northern, anti-migrant and anti-Muslim, thus playing on the memories of the Hausa and Yoruba minority of the Busia government's expulsion order of 1969 (Weiss, 2008). Also, it was alleged that during the 2008 election campaign, the NPP threatened to deport Zongo people if they won; this dissuaded most Zongo people against voting for the NPP (Kobo, 2010).

Perceptions that the U.P traditions unfavored strangers and non-indigenous people against the open-door policies of the CPP -which allowed many people

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[3] Notwithstading the above, it appears the Tamale Zongo is different. In the previous election results, evidence suggest that the Zongo communities in Tamale usually vote massively for the NPP; it has thus been termed as a stronghold of the NPP due to the Tijaniyya link.

from neighboring countries to migrate to Ghana in large numbers in search for greener pastures- greatly affected the participation of Muslims (Kobo, 2010). There used to be a joke in Tamale in the 1960s where a Yoruba victim of the repatriation order was overheard saying:

> *Mu mun the PP Party Papa,*
> *PP Party Papa,*
> *Ashe PP party Party Banza.*

To wit:

> *We said PP Good Party,*
> *PP Good Party,*
> Not knowing PP is a Bad Party.

The NDC, especially in the first election of the fourth republic in 1992, used the *Aliens Compliance Order* as a campaign strategy to win votes from Zongo communities (Kobo, 2010). The Muslims' affinity with the NDC has also been attributed to the rational political behavior of how better off or less well off one or a group will be under a party that wins the election (Hanretta, 2011). It has been reported that the government of J.J. Rawlings, the founder of NDC, has been the only administration since the First Republic that brought significant development to Muslims and the Northern region in general (Dumbe, 2013). The NDC, under Rawlings, is accredited with the two major holidays granted to Muslims on their two major festive days Eid-ul Adha and Eid-ul Fitr (Dumbe, 2013).

The perception that the NDC is a party for Muslims and Zongos (which is not wholly true) has been prevalent in contemporary era. Previous election results show that certain Muslim dominated communities usually vote for the NDC. This perception seems to be consolidated by the Ayawaso and Asawasi constituencies in Accra and Kumase respectively where Dr. Mustapha Ahmad and Alhaj Muntaka Ahmad have always won the seat for the NDC. However, the performance of Sheikh I. C. Quaye as the parliamentary candidate representing the NPP in the Ayawaso west constituency challenges that perception (Weiss, 2008). Knowing that such perceptions can affect their fortunes in an election where numbers matter a lot, the NPP has done a lot to erase the perception that it is not for Zongo people or Muslims in general (Weiss, 2008).

Strategically, the role of Alhaj Aliu Mahama as vice-president to John Agyekum Kuffuor for eight years [from 2001-2008] and the appointment of Dr. Bawumia to partner Akuffo Addo in the 2012, 2016 and 2020 elections appear that, at the highest level of power, the NPP has also shown more commitment to

Muslims and Zongo people. Within the NDC itself, the party's executive has been assigning the position of the running mate (of the presidential candidate) to a Muslim or a person of northern descent. From this, it can be inferred that the above arrangement influenced the NDC's decision to nominate Martin Amidu – who was not a Muslim but one who had a Northern descent – as the running mate for Professor Mills in the run-up to the 2000 presidential election.

This demand subsequently has come to shape the contest of who becomes the running mate of the two major parties. In the NPP too, the party has been using Muslims or persons of Northern descent to negate the NDC's accusations of merely being a vehicle for Asante hegemony (Weiss, 2008). Currently, a conscious effort is made by the two major parties to get either a Muslim or a northerner as a running mate to the flag bearer or the presidential candidate. The NDC under the leadership of Attah Mills appointed John Mahama, a person of Northern descent and close affinity to Muslims, as the running mate. Subsequently, with the demise of Attah Mills, Mahama became the president and contested the subsequent elections as the incumbent president.

It may be argued that the NDC are the pioneers in recognizing and giving a lot of opportunities to people from Zongo: Importantly, the late Alhaji Yahaya who was an unlettered person became an MP for Nima; the late Dr. Farouq Braimah, a Yoruba man, became a Minister; Alhaji Iddrisu Mahama was Minister of Defense (1996-2000) under the presidency of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. Issifu Ali became the Chairman of the NDC before the year 2000 and Hudu Yahya was also appointed as the General Secretary of the NDC before 2000.

Significantly, while the prominent Muslim presence in party politics was mostly by people who were indigenes of Ghana, it was the NDC who gave prominence to non-indigenous Ghanaian Muslims to serve at various levels of government (Dumbe, 2013). Similarly, the NPP has tried to cancel out this comparative advantage by having the Nasara Club (victory club) to improve the support base of the NPP in the Zongos (Nugent, 2001).[4] As the equation stands now, all the major parties including the CPP, PPP and PNC have some Muslim representation and membership which is strategically good for Ghana as a nation and Muslims as a community. It must be pointed out that some of these measures have paid off especially for the NPP. Currently, evidence from the 2016 elections shows significant NPP support groups within the Muslim dominated communities.

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[4] The Nasara Club is made up of the inhabitants of the Zongos and are believed to be ardent supporters of the NDC.

The prevailing situation in Ghanaian party politics is that there are Muslims in every party and every Zongo community; you would find people belonging to different political parties and even in the so-called strongholds of some parties. This indicates that there are always dissenting voices who vote differently from the majority. Moreover, the two strongest parties in Ghana, the NDC and the NPP have all formed governments with a sizeable Muslim presence in the Fourth Republic.

Muslims Involvement beyond Political Parties: Challenges in Contemporary Times

In Ghana, under the Fourth Republic, Muslims have participated at various levels of politics; they vote, become members of political parties, occupy public office and become members of the legislature and the executive among others (Ansah-Kobi, 1993). The presence of Muslims in these areas has been uneven. Whereas their participation at the lower levels – such as voting, campaigning and attending rallies – has been quite high and significant (Al-Momani, 2010), the same cannot be said of their participation at the higher levels such as membership of the legislature, executive and the judiciary (Shiraz, 2015). The reasons for this has been associated with the limited resources for participation available to Muslim communities, especially among the immigrant Muslims in the Zongos (Shiraz, 2015). These include formal education, financial resources, a feeling of confidence, and political efficacy (Shiraz, 2015).

Essentially, education among Muslims in the country especially in Muslim-dominated communities or Zongos has been the traditional Arabic education (Skinner, 2013). This type of education renders graduates dysfunctional or nonfunctional in the formal sectors of the economy and politics. Their form of education tends to restrict Muslims from active and effective participation in large sectors of the economy including national politics (Skinner, 2013).

Aside from education, financial resources also affect the extent of involvement of a person or a group in politics. Muslim dominated communities have been associated with slums and poverty. Price (1954) described the Muslims in Zongos as "hewers and drawers of water". The dominant economic activities within these communities include butchery, sewing, embroidery and petty trading among others (Kobo, 2010; Asuming-Bediako et al., 2018). Consequently, the majority of Muslim communities lack the kind of people or groups with the economic muscles capable of influencing politics significantly.

At the higher level of politics, the participation of Muslims continues to breed concern. At these levels, the number of Muslims in notable institutions such

as parliament, executive, judiciary and council of state have been quite low (Ansah-Kobi, 1993). For instance, the first and second parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana recorded about 34 and 30 Muslim parliamentarians respectively. This constituted about 17% and 15% of the total membership of the House (Dumbe, 2013). It must be pointed out that, almost all the Muslim parliamentarian won their seats from Muslim dominated areas. In the judiciary, Muslim influence is felt in personalities such as Nuhu Billa, S. Dramani and the judicial secretary, Justice Sulley Nasurudeeen Ghadegbe of the court of appeal and justice Mustapha (Political Desk Report, 2020).

The question of low participation of Muslims in higher offices of politics appears to be international. As at 2010, no known Muslim had occupied the highest office or had been elected as a senator in Australia since the commencement of her federation (Al-Momani et al., 2010). Concerning the United States of America, Muslims have continually been urged to participate fully in the affairs of the highest level of political participation due to the pluralistic nature of their country (Haddad & Ricks, 2010).

For the first time in the history of the country, Issifu Omoro Tanko Amadu, a Muslim was appointed by the President, Nana Akuffo Addo to the Supreme Court (The Presidency, 2020). This appointment has attracted the attention of the Muslim community as both the spokesperson of the Chief Imam and the Coalition of Muslims Organisations Ghana (COMOG) officially thanked the President for the appointment (Political Desk Report, 2020). In the case of the media, often described as the fourth estate of the realm, Muslims' presence is felt in activities relating to TV and radio programmes. In Islamic programs such as Islam in focus and Aqeedah among others, issues including those of politics and society that affect the Muslim communities are discussed (Pontzen, 2018). Currently, there are Muslim owned radio stations such as Marhaba in Accra, Zuria and Alpha in Kumase. These radio stations discuss political issues that affect Muslims directly both at the national and local levels (Pontzen, 2018). Worth stating are Islamic newspapers such as the Muslim Searchlight, the Fountain; even though defunct. The editor of the Fountain, enumerated the objectives of the paper to include, projecting Islam and Muslims by serving as a political mouthpiece for Muslims (Samwini, 2006).

Currently, after over twenty years of multi-party democracy, significant improvements have been recorded in the political activities of Muslims. The turn out during voting at presidential and parliamentary elections has significantly increased (Shiraz, 2015). The situation is explained by the current trend in educational pursuit of Muslims (Nielsen, 2010; Skinner, 2013; Moritz et al., 2018).

In Britain, the educational needs of young Muslims have spurred the formation of pro-Muslim organizations seeking to redress the nature and quality of education within the public space (Nielsen, 2010).

In Ghana, Muslims have now largely embraced western-style secular education; most of the traditional Arabic Schools have now been absorbed into the Islamic Education Project (IEP), whilst the Arabic and English schools have also been absorbed into the Islamic Education Service and placed under the Ghana Education Service (GES) (Skinner, 2013). Consequently, an appreciable number of Muslims are now being produced with improved awareness, education and skills to engage in the administration of the state. That notwithstanding, Muslim womens' participation continue to remain low (Shiraz, 2015).

Conclusion

Muslim participation in Ghanaian politics has transitioned through varied degrees. At the onset of their participation, the initial intention of Muslims for participating in politics was to influence policy to address the concerns of Muslims. In 1953, Muslims formed the MAP as a tool to have their interest advanced. Importantly, they sought to pursue the same agenda but within a larger framework and at all levels of participation.

At the inception of the Fourth Republic, the participation of Muslims at higher levels of politics has increased relatively. More Muslims and/or people of Northern descent have received valuable appointments within government. Nevertheless, it has been reported that the numbers of Muslims in public political offices remain scant; in important positions such as ministerial positions, membership of the council of state, parliament and the judiciary, their numbers are unsatisfactory. Aside John Dramani Mahama, who is of Northern descent, no Muslim has had the opportunity to lead the country as a President.

Irrespective of their numbers, Muslims' contribution to politics, law and other political avenues for the management of the country cannot be overlooked. Muslims in ruling parties and other opposition parties did and continue to make input into the overall calculus of decisions that determine the direction and course of their various parties. At the grass-root level, where Muslim presence is significantly felt, the pressure is brought to bear on the government to attend to the needs of the people.

The findings revealed that even though the perception is that the NDC appeals more to people from Zongo, the NPP has also given special portfolios including vice-presidential positions to people who are associated with Zongos.

Currently, there is a significant recognition for Muslims and increased access to educational and recreational facilities, such as the recent modern sports facilities that are built in Zongos under the Zongo Development Fund. The Muslim festive occasions have assumed a new dimension with the constant visit of the presidents and other top government officials to address Muslim gatherings. The ministers and parliamentarians who are Muslims have become avenues for lobbying on behalf of Muslims.

In contemporary era, the participation of Muslims has been fraught with myriad of challenges. To that extent, we deduce that any meaningful progress of Muslims in the politics of the country has to consider the need to tolerate divergent views or to coexist peacefully with opponents; the need to address apathy that is associated with immigrant Muslims who still owe allegiance to their countries of origin and hence remain indifferent and do not feel obliged to participate; the need to deal with the predominantly impoverished status of Muslims that has militated against their ability to contribute significantly to political party activities and the need to deal with the division and unhealthy rivalry among Muslims, orchestrated partly by some materialistic politicians who employ the practice of divide and rule.

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