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THE POLITICS OF RICE FARMING IN DAGBON, 1972-1979

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### ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the agricultural policies of the Acheampong military regime towards rice farmers in Dagbon, a traditional area in the Northern Region of Ghana, and the relationship that developed between the farmers and the regime as a result. Commercial rice production expanded rapidly when the regime's policy of self-sufficiency in food parcelled out the North as the main rice production zone. All farmers were expected to participate in the programme, but in consequence of the nature of the policies employed to encourage rice production it was the big and well-connected ones who gained at the expense of the smaller farmers.

The relationship between these privileged rice farmers and the government was further enhanced by their membership of, or support for, the local ruling chieftaincy faction which was in turn supported by the regime. It was a reciprocal arrangement by which the regime in turn received the full support and co-operation of that faction, especially during the referendum on Union Government in 1978. However, it was the prominent rice farmers, working in collaboration with the ruling chiefs, and operating mainly through local institutions, who acted as local agents and ambassadors of the regime. Of course it was not all big rice farmers who supported the regime, but those who did not found it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain assistance from local farming agencies, and represented the main source of opposition to government policies.

In return for their support for the regime the farmers were rewarded with import licences, huge bank loans, access to all available farming inputs, and even officials' co-operation in smuggling. On their part the farmers cultivated vast rice farms for commissioners and senior officials posted in the South.

The fall of Acheampong in July 1978 rendered the position of his client farmers very vulnerable, but their initial fears were assuaged when the incoming regime failed to take effective action against those alleged to have 'abused' the system. When the ban on political parties was lifted in 1978 and elections were scheduled

for later that year, the big rice farmers grouped themselves into well-defined alliances with parties which they considered would best represent their interest.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	Action Congress Party
ADB	Agricultural Development Bank
ADM	Administration
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
CCNT	Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CO	Colonial Office
CPP	Convention People's Party
CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office
DCE	District Chief Executive
DEMCO	Development Mechanisation Company
EDDC	Eastern Dagomba District Council
FASCOM	Farmers' Services Company
GGADP	Ghanaian German Agricultural Development Project
GNRC	Ghana National Reconstruction Corps
IFCAT	Institute for Field Communication and Agricultural Training
NAG	National Archives of Ghana
NBB	Never Bad Boys
NIB	National Investment Bank
NLC	National Liberation Council
NORRIP	Northern Regional Integrated Project
NPP	Northern People's Party
NRC	National Redemption Council
NRDC	Northern Regional Development Corporation
NRHC	Northern Regional House of Chiefs
NYA	Northern Youth Association

OFY	Operation Feed Yourself
OFYOI	Operation Feed Your Own Industries
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PFP	Popular Front Party
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PNP	People's National Party
PP	Progress Party
PRO	Public Record Office
RGA	Rice Growers' Association
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SMC	Supreme Military Council
SMU	Special Marketing Unit
TFP	Third Force Party
TNA	National Archives, Tamale
TREND	Training in Extension for National Development
UAC	United Africa Company
UNC	United National Convention
URADEP	Upper Regional Agricultural Development Project
WARDA	West African Rice Development Association
WDDC	Western Dagomba District Council

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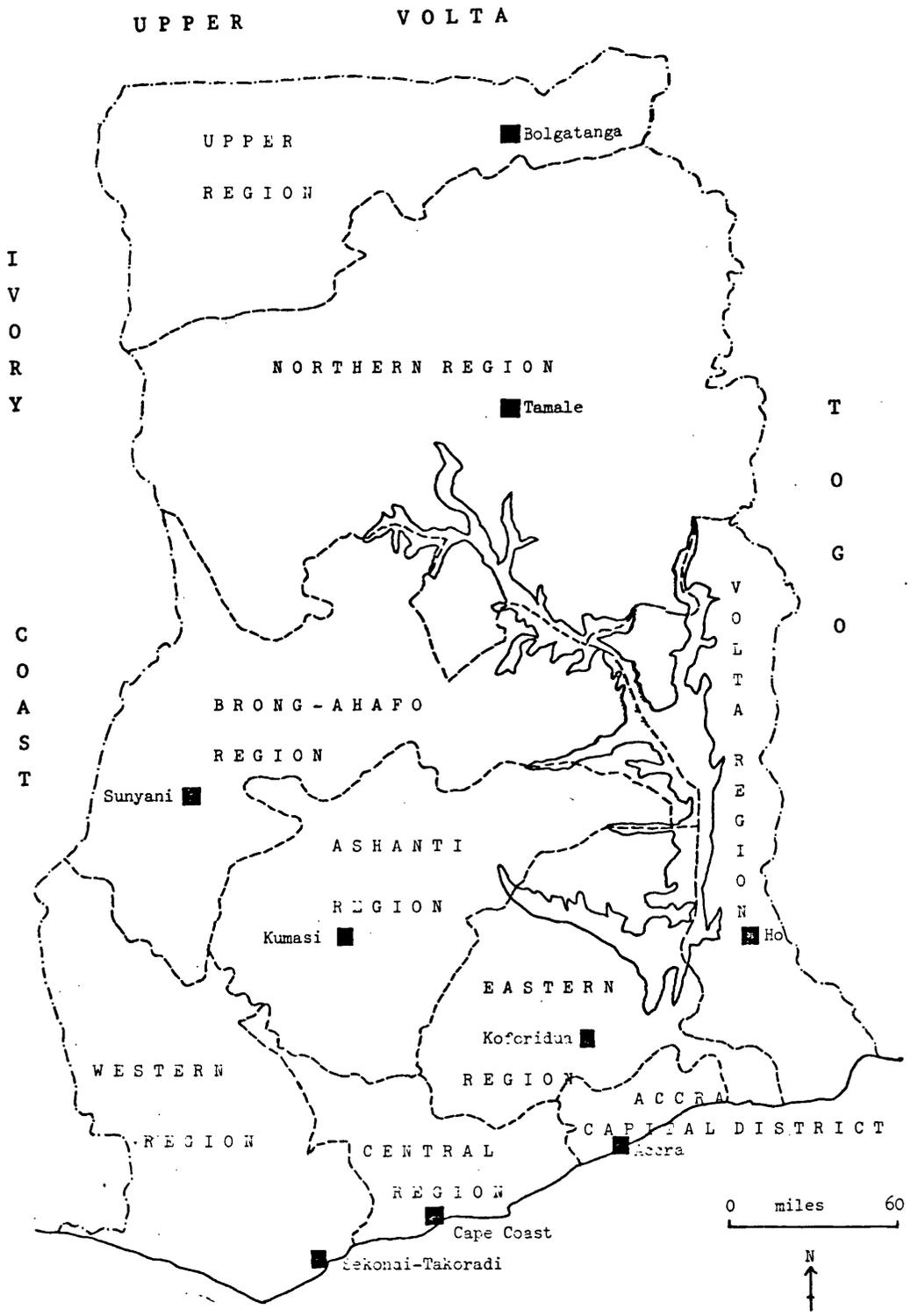
I would like to thank a great number of people for the different ways in which they helped, but I can only mention a few of them here. Among those I wish to mention especially for their co-operation are the staff of the Tamale Archives, the Ministry of Agriculture in Tamale, the Ghanaian German Agricultural Development Project, and the Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale. I would also like to acknowledge the co-operation and hospitality of several chiefs, especially Wulshie Na, Nyankpalana, and former Ya Na Mahamadu Abudulai IV, as well as two prominent rice farmers, Alhaji Sumani Zakaria and Abu Alidu. I learnt a great deal about the internal politics of the Rice Growers' Association in the course of my several discussions with these farmers.

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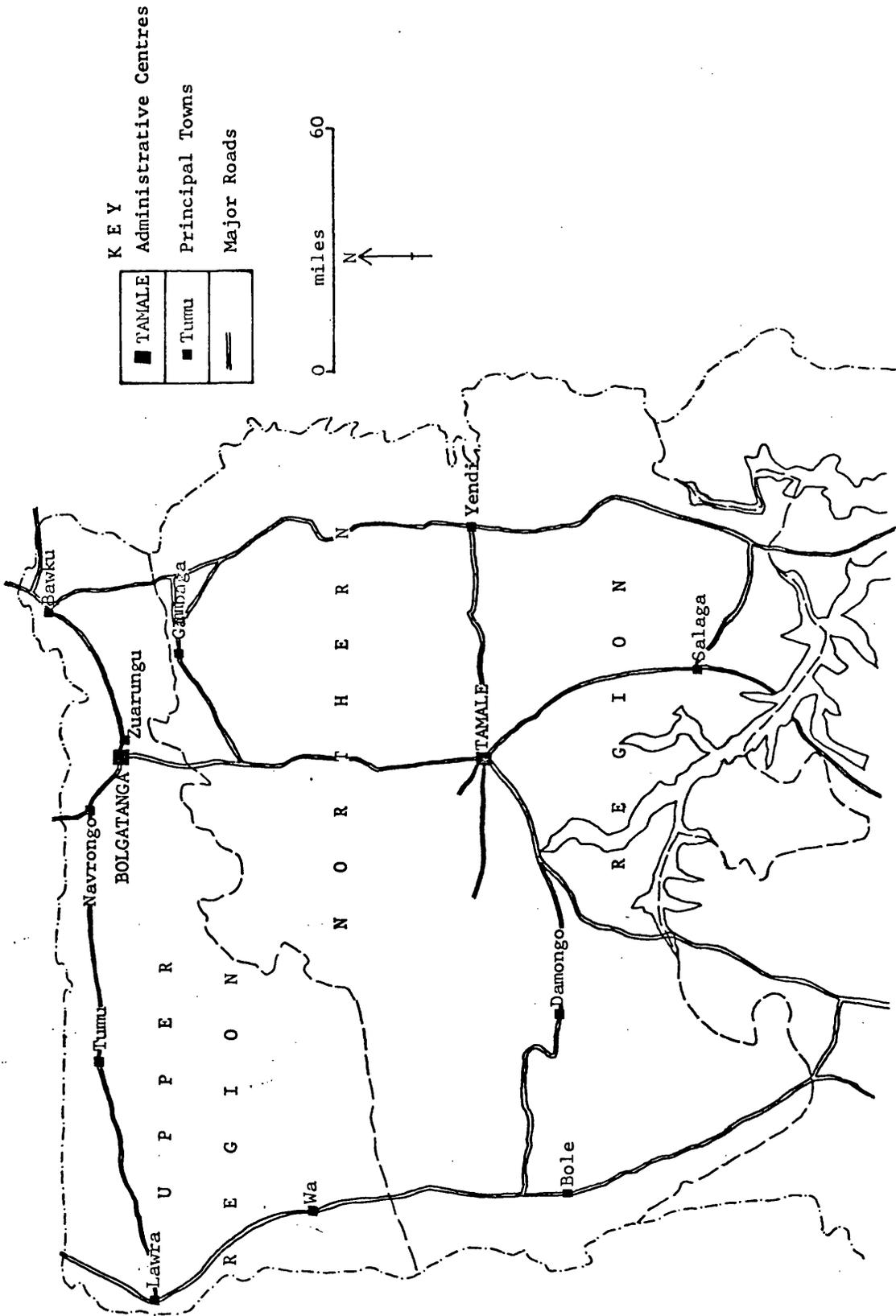
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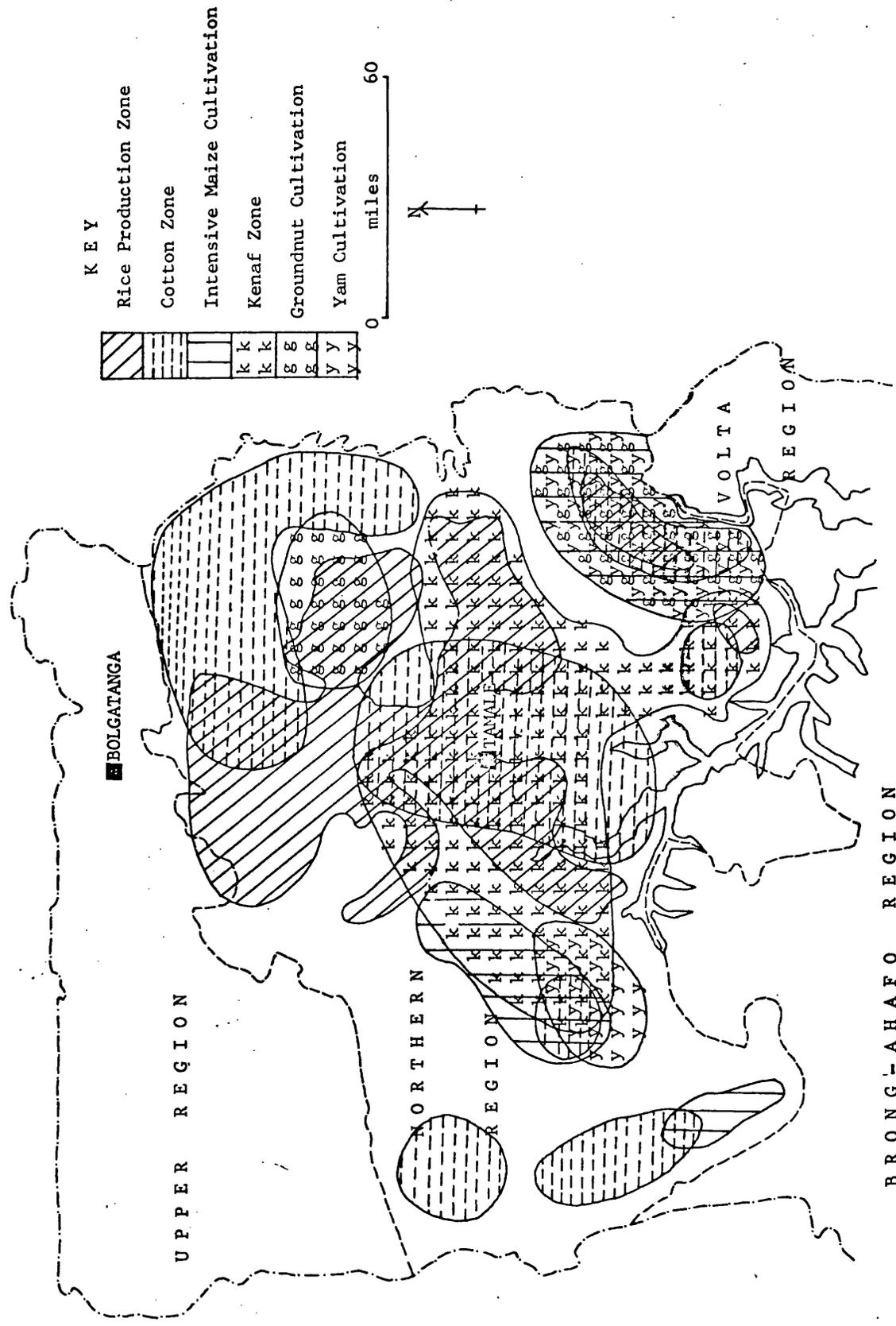
My greatest debt must however go to the Dagomba farmers, both small and large, for allowing me to investigate into their social system and freely participate in their way of life. Research among these farmers was a pleasant and rewarding experience. I would like to thank also Cheryll Pearce, Janet Marks and Annette Percy for their skill and patience in typing successive drafts of the manuscript, and Hazell Barrett for her skill in reproducing the maps. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the encouragement and assistance given by close friends and family, especially Jennifer Bernard, Henry George, and my sister Barbara and parents.



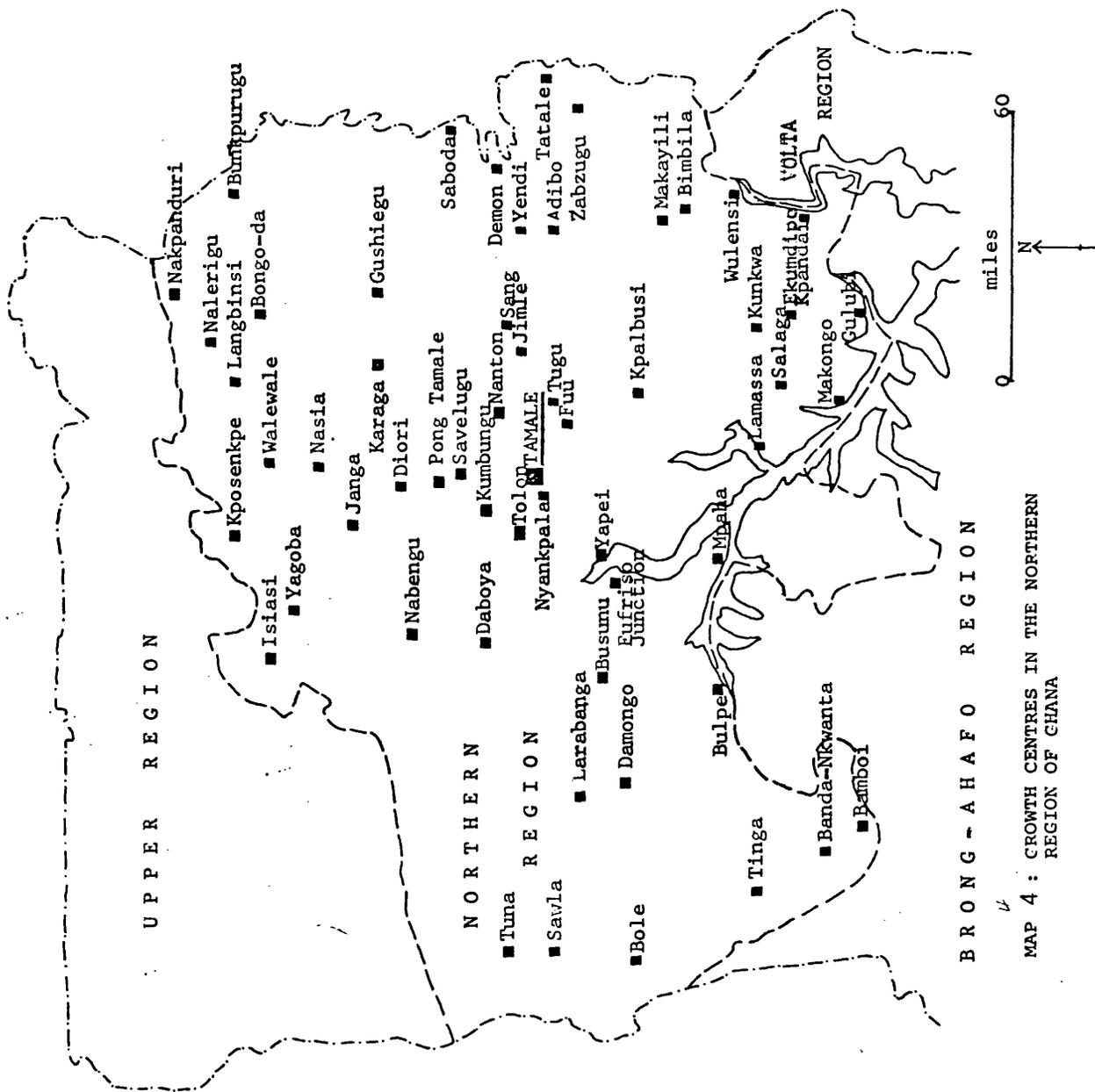
MAP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS OF GHANA



MAP 2 : UPPER AND NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA SHOWING ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRES, PRINCIPAL TOWNS AND ROADS



BRONG-AHAFO REGION  
 MAP 3: CROP PRODUCTION ZONES IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA



MAP 4 : GROWTH CENTRES IN THE NORTHERN REGION OF GHANA

## INTRODUCTION

During the past ten years or so Ghana has experienced a serious decline in agricultural production, both as regards cocoa exports and foodstuffs, which has been a major cause of her more general catastrophic economic decline. Yet during the same period, which coincided largely with the Acheampong regime (1972-78), the Ghanaian government focussed its official economic policy on improving agricultural production, especially rice, through the joint strategies of Operation Feed Yourself and Operation Feed Your Own Industries. Their main objectives were to improve food production in the country as a whole, to supply raw materials for home based industries, and to conserve the drain on the country's all-important foreign reserves. Considerable sums were attracted from foreign countries and were allocated by the Ghanaian government itself for the supposed purpose of implementing new agricultural projects.

As far as the North of Ghana (the Northern and Upper Regions) was concerned, large sums were allocated for the development of agriculture. The period saw the construction of two major irrigation schemes in the Upper Region - the Tono Irrigation Scheme, and the Veia Dam Project - which were intended to facilitate round-the-year farming for small farmers. The increased importance with which agriculture was viewed by the authorities led to the decentralisation of the Ministry of Agriculture in that region and the establishment in 1977 of a new and ambitious organisation, the Upper Regional Agricultural Development Project (URADEP), to take over the functions of that ministry. This was charged to 'transform' the entire agricultural outlook of the region by a series of programmes supposedly intended to 'educate' the farmers in the use of modern farm technology and to provide them with extension

services and inputs. Emphasis was placed on small farmers, and the project, involving several millions of pounds, was financed jointly by World Bank countries and the Ghanaian government.

As far as agricultural development in the Northern Region itself was concerned, emphasis was placed on rice production. By far the largest agricultural project constructed in the Northern Region was the Northern Regional Integrated Programme (NORRIP), which was initiated in 1979 and based largely upon the URADEP model. There were, in addition, several other projects that were either already established or 'projected' for the area in the future. Small farmers were to be especially encouraged and various institutions were set up to assist them. The Agricultural Development Bank, for example, was singled out by the government to assist small farmers as a whole, including rice farmers. Finally, a number of heavily subsidised agricultural agencies were set up to provide tractor and other mechanical farm services to the farmers.

The immediate effect of the government's agricultural policies was a sharp increase in the total area under rice cultivation and in the number of farmers, both large and small, who participated in rice production. Within a few years, however, (and certainly by 1978, the time of the initial fieldwork for this thesis), it was apparent that the amount of rice being produced was falling far short of the original projections and even more so of the needs of the domestic market.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in so far as profitable rice farms were established, these were almost entirely large farms, mostly owned by newcomers to farming.

Thus we encounter two paradoxes as far as government policies with regard to agriculture are concerned: firstly, the disappointingly small increase in rice production despite the heavy expenditure allocated to it; and secondly, the failure to assist small rice growers despite the

declared policies of the government to do so. Shepherd has further argued that the government sponsorship of commercial rice farming in Northern Ghana was decidedly non-optimal from the point of view of the economy as a whole, i.e. the foreign exchange and other resources spent on rice would have been far better utilised on reviving established industries, for example, cocoa.<sup>2</sup> According to Shepherd, it was not even rational from the perspective of redistribution of income, since the majority of small-scale farmers could not (legally at least) make a profit out of it.

Why, then, did the Acheampong regime pursue such a policy? A starting point might be found in the observations and arguments put forward by Robert Bates in Markets and States in Tropical Africa.<sup>3</sup> Bates has suggested that declining agricultural production is a fairly general phenomenon in African countries which can only be understood through a consideration of the politics of their regimes, including the nature of agricultural policies. He has, at a general level, argued that the attractiveness of such schemes lies not in their (national) economic rationality but in their ability (1) to attract foreign aid and (2) to provide increased political patronage and, more especially, to cement an alliance with local 'big' farmers, who might in turn act as patrons to small farmers and thereby contain the discontent of the latter.

This thesis is an attempt to examine the validity of Bates' theory in relation to the case of government sponsored rice-farming in Northern Ghana. While it concludes by accepting Bates' general theory, it seeks to go beyond it in analysing the specific mechanisms by which a 'class' of 'kulak' rice farmers was created and how this related to the 'traditional' political and economic structure. It also seeks to examine the questions of to what extent this group established itself as

a distinct 'class' and how they reacted to political developments following the fall of the Acheampong regime.

One important argument only briefly raised by Bates, i.e. that although the smaller farmers lose from such policies, the larger farmers and/or those sufficiently well connected to become large farmers can benefit very considerably from them, will be carried further. It will be shown how these large farmers in turn put pressure on the regime to further protect their interests. But of course, something was expected in return and, during the period under review, these farmers gave their loyal support to the Acheampong regime, especially during the 1978 referendum on Union Government. More specifically, we will attempt to show how two organisations - the Rice Growers' Association and the Special Marketing Unit - which were set up to represent the broad interests of all rice farmers, in fact came to be dominated by the larger farmers and their supporters, and at the same time were transformed into the political and propaganda organs of the regime.

This study will also attempt to examine how the government's policies have intermeshed with the local, still heavily tradition-orientated politics of Northern Ghana, more particularly the Dagomba. It examines the relationship between 'traditional' political divisions and status differences on the one hand, and a process of what might loosely be termed 'class formation' on the other. Of course traditional politics has always assumed an important role in Dagomba society, but the military regime's active sponsorship of certain groups and individuals, including influential chiefs, meant that those chiefs gained in prestige and influence, so that association with them, whether by blood ties or otherwise, gave considerable advantages to well-connected clients.

The consideration of the above observations carries implications

for another important theoretical issue. Class formation in African societies has generally been perceived by neo-marxists to be a natural consequence of the increasing penetration of capital and capitalism into these societies via neo-colonialism. The development of a rural agricultural programme in general and the commercialisation of rice production in particular has certainly been bound to give rise to some form of socio-economic differentiation within the 'peasantry'. The precise degree and form that this development has taken, at least in Northern Ghana, has been more the product of the State's agricultural policies and of its politics more generally. It is the State, rather than endogenous or international economic forces, in combination with the structure of local politics, which has been the main 'crucible' of class formation. The question consequently arises, however, as to how permanent the membership or even existence of the 'large farmer' class really is, since the dependence of such a class on the regime in power means that its position is more likely to alter with a change in regime (its power to reproduce itself is more limited) than is arguably the case in more economically developed societies. Of course the eventual answer to this question will be quite complex.

The first chapter of this dissertation gives an introduction to the Dagomba political system. Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the general economic development of the North prior to the Acheampong period. Section I of this chapter is concerned more specifically with the colonial strategies that were used for the development of the North, while Section II attempts a brief analysis of the performance of the economy from about 1950 in order to provide a background or 'setting' for the development strategies of the 1970s. Chapter 3 examines the official rationale of Acheampong's National Redemption Council for developing rice farming in the North, while chapters 4 and 5 are concerned with the effect of the regime's policy of subsidised agriculture upon small-scale and

large-scale rice farmers. Chapter 6 is an elaboration of the relevance of chieftaincy politics to being well-connected. The mechanisms through which big farmers become politically and economically very influential are examined in chapter 7, while in chapter 8 we examine the small rice farmers' organisational responses to the big farmers' dominance. Finally, in chapter 9 we provide an analysis of the rice farmers' political behaviour during the 1979 elections.

Material for this dissertation was collected from a number of sources, such as published material, archives, interviews with knowledgeable 'officials' of various kinds, and survey interviews of farmers. But most importantly, very extensive use was made of the anthropological method - getting to see the situation and the problems through the eyes of the farmers themselves and getting to understand their 'reality'. Polly Hill has pointed to the checks and safeguards that are implicit in the 'anthropological procedure'. As she argued, if the anthropologists' method is properly applied for a sufficiently long period "the main features of an articulated structure" will inevitably emerge.<sup>4</sup> I made an explicit attempt to follow this model. Insights which were gained by interviews or otherwise were checked against observation in principle, and references to such checks are made wherever applicable in the thesis.

Fieldwork for this study was conducted in two parts, the first during my field trip to Ghana between December 1977 and November 1978, and the second during a return visit between July and October 1979. The first field trip took place at a time when the government's agricultural and other economic policies were generally perceived to have failed and when the rate of inflation, including that of domestically produced foodstuffs, was at its peak. The second trip coincided with the period of the elections and the June 4 'revolution' of Jerry Rawlings.

The object of this second trip was to study the relationship between farmers in the North and political parties, while it also offered a unique opportunity to observe public reactions to Rawlings' coup. This important political event is outside the main scope of this dissertation, although allusions will be made where necessary.

The first month of my first visit to Ghana was spent working on documentary material from the National Archives in Accra and at the Library of the University of Ghana at Legon (these materials supplementing work which had been carried out earlier at the Public Record Office in London). This was immediately followed by a trip to Tamale where I was to conduct the bulk of my research. My first task was to familiarise myself with the community, and getting to 'understand' the local way of life. Fortunately, that did not prove as problematic as I had first anticipated, for almost immediately upon reaching Tamale I met Mohammed Eddie, a teacher at Saca-Saca Middle School, and an impending student of the University of Ghana at Legon, who at once proved to be a very reliable friend and an invaluable guide. Eddie later became my research assistant, and it was largely through his efforts that I promptly met and acquainted myself with several influential personalities in the North - farmers, ex-politicians, businessmen, chiefs, civil servants, expatriates, and so on.

The success of this early period of orientation and familiarisation was especially important in view of the prevailing tension and uncertainty throughout the country caused by the repressive politics of the Acheampong regime, as well as the uncertainties of the impending referendum on Unigov. Furthermore, there was the chieftaincy factor in the North, an extremely delicate issue which had to be handled with caution, diplomacy, and skill, in order to avoid being accused of

'taking sides' - an outcome that would have destroyed any chance of conducting meaningful research into an already sensitive area. It was therefore even more necessary to gain the full confidence of potential informants before launching fully into the more substantive research. Thus, whilst I spent much time getting to 'know' the North during the first three months or so, my data collection focussed on less sensitive sources - the Tamale Archives, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ghanaian-German Agricultural Development Project (GGADP), the Ministry of Economic Planning, and the Western Dagomba District Council (WDDC), among others. By the time I started the interviews I was already familiar with the general problems confronting the farmers in the North, and had gained certain fundamental insights into the political attitudes of several of the big farmers in the district. Most importantly, several of the farmers and officials interviewed were already familiar with me, thus reducing considerably any strain or 'tension' that might otherwise have developed. For example, during a visit to the Nyankpalana's palace he introduced me to the farmers as a 'friend' who had come to investigate into their very serious problems.

The problems posed during the second field trip were of a different nature, since I was returning to already familiar territory. It was like renewing old acquaintances. However, there was, if anything, an even more pronounced air of tension and political uncertainty caused by the events of the June 4 coup. Several 'big' men (including large farmers, businessmen, executives and high ranking military officers) had either been 'rounded-up' or had fled the country to avoid public humiliation and arrest during the early days of the coup. It became necessary, once again, to tread cautiously and be circumspect in the course of research. It was not particularly difficult to relate to respondents who were already known to me, but others were less

forthcoming, and in many cases several visits were arranged to their homes before an interview or informal discussion could eventually take place. When it became clear that the information sought was about their political affiliations rather than their attitudes towards the Rawlings regime, discussions were often uninhibited and at times stimulating.

During the first phase of the survey of rice farmers, a total of 146 farmers were formally interviewed (70 large and 76 small-scale) while, during the second phase conducted between July and September 1979, a total of 288 farmers (128 large and 160 small) were interviewed. Interviews were confined to the Dagomba area, although most of them were concentrated in the environs of the quasi-urban districts of Tamale, Yendi and Savelugu where most rice farmers had their homes. In most cases the interviews were conducted in Dagbani, with Eddie, a Dagomba, acting as interpreter and proving a great asset not only because of my extreme limitations in the language, but also because of his inclination to check even the most minute of details. A number of these interviews, however, were conducted in English or 'pidgin' English. Questions were of the 'open-ended' type, designed to encourage broad-ranging comments rather than suggest neat answers. In fact, a great deal of valuable and interesting information was gathered from the general discussions that accompanied or followed interviews.

In addition to formal interviews, a large number of informal conversations were held with farmers and people connected with farming in one way or another, among them bank officials, officials at the Ministry of Agriculture, chiefs, military officers and government representatives at the regional level. These discussions mostly took place in the homes of the people concerned, though also quite often in pleasure spots - discos, restaurants, bars - where the informality of

the occasion proved very conducive to the gaining of information. It was during such an informal meeting at Old Man 'Chop' (food) bar in Tamale with a rice farmer that I first became acquainted with the political, i.e. factional, divisions within the Rice Growers' Association. These informal discussions, especially with officials, were often used to cross-check facts obtained from other (especially dubious) sources.

Although the study is based on the Dagomba area and research was conducted largely in that area, a substantial amount of material was collected on the North as a whole, especially the Upper Region. The account of URADEP, for example, is largely supplemented by documentary material from the project's headquarters in Bolgatanga and interview material with its officials. Discussions were also held with several large farmers and other well-connected people there, such as the Bolga-Naba, the regional Chief Farmer, and former politician R.B. Braimah. The value of such work was both comparative and analytical, and it helped to explain and illustrate several of the issues raised in this study as a whole.

The period of fieldwork in Ghana was not an entirely liberal one. The atmosphere immediately preceding and following the March referendum, the removal of Acheampong from office, and finally, the days of the June 4 coup, undoubtedly hindered research, especially amongst the big rice farmers who were particularly affected by the later events. Despite these setbacks, however, rapport could be established even with such farmers (usually after a long period of acquaintance) and, when it was, interviews and discussions were uninhibited and often stimulating. By contrast, the political events of the late 1970s did not seem to restrict the smaller farmers who were always inviting discussion. It is hoped, that the analysis which follows succeeds in portraying the rice farmers' own view of their situation, as well as in situating this

within an understanding of the reality derived from more conventionally academic sources.

NOTES

1. See Table 4.3 in Chapter 4 for a comparison of estimated and actual purchases of paddy by the Government Rice Mills. Smuggling of a substantial proportion of the rice produced in the North was the major cause of the low official purchases.
2. A.W. Shepherd, The Development of Capitalist Rice Farming in Northern Ghana, University of Cambridge Ph.D. dissertation, 1979.
3. Robert H. Bates, Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies, University of California Press, 1981.
4. Polly Hill, Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana, Cambridge, 1963.

CHAPTER ONE

DAGOMBA POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ITS EVOLUTION

The political economy of Northern Ghana, more especially Dagbon, cannot be adequately analysed outside the context of tradition. Tradition and development are not necessarily antithetical concepts. On the contrary, tradition has played a very important role in the political and economic development of Dagbon. As we shall see in the following chapters, every institution in Dagbon was influenced by its relationship to chieftaincy ties. The interplay between tradition and modernity has been observed by several scholars. Huntington, for example, has argued that modern society is not simply modern, but it is also "modern and traditional".<sup>1</sup> Gusfield objects on grounds of "misplaced polarities" to the dichotomy which separates modernity and tradition and to the assumption that they are in conflict.<sup>2</sup> And finally, Whitaker has suggested that "dysrhythmic" change (by which he means change in one sector which is not accompanied by change in other sectors) is a more appropriate way of perceiving political development in some societies, such as the emirates of Northern Nigeria.<sup>3</sup>

These scholars utilise a 'synthetic' as opposed to a 'displacement' model,<sup>4</sup> which posits more adaptability on the part of societies in general and traditional roles in particular. Change in one sector of society need not extend consistently or "unidirectionally", as Barrows has observed. Modern and traditional traits "can fuse, interpenetrate, or co-exist without systematic conflict".<sup>5</sup>

Present-day Dagomba society can best be conceived as an admixture of traditional values and modern institutions. It is also characterised by political conflict, but this is not conflict caused by the interpenetration of the two sectors: the modern and traditional. It is

rather the result of competition between elements or groups within the traditional sector to dominate this sector. In this chapter we will attempt a discussion of the Dagomba political structure and its evolution, and then proceed to explain why the institution of chieftaincy was so important to these people. We will also hope to explain the origins of gate politics in Dagbon and the motives influencing people's support for one side over another.

#### Origins of the Dagomba State

The Dagomba state, an area of some 8,000 square miles, was founded around the fifteenth century by a group of migrant cavalrymen travelling south. It was one of several states founded by these invaders in the area of present-day northern Ghana: others being Mamprusi, Gonja and Nanumba.

There has been some doubt as to the exact origins of these conquerors. It has been suggested that the Dagomba are related to Egyptian Coptic exiles who supposedly arrived at some date before the fourteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Some Northern administrators, notably Eyre-Smith, were for a time in agreement with the notion of an eastern origin.<sup>7</sup> Most of the authorities seem to agree, however, that the founders of the Dagomba State were pagans of Hausa origin, perhaps from Zamfara. According to Fage, these migrants moved Westwards as they supported themselves by raiding the towns of the Niger valley.<sup>8</sup> They were pushed further South during the fifteenth century and settled at Pusiga in Northern Ghana. The head of the settlement there was Na Gbewa who was said to have seventeen children. The eldest, Zirile, succeeded him at Pusiga while the others moved away to establish kingdoms throughout Northern Ghana. One of the brothers, Toshagu, founded the Mamprusi state at Nalerigu, while another, Sitobu, established the branch which

subsequently controlled the Dagomba. After further conquests one of Sitobu's sons, Nyagse, was invested by his father as head of the new kingdom, and became in effect the first Ya Na of the Dagombas.<sup>9</sup>

The period following the conquest of Dagbon was marked by one of consolidation during which new institutions were created or old ones modified to give stability and continuity to the state. Indigenous tindanas (earth priests) were either killed or removed and replaced by members of the royal dynasty. But the institution itself was not destroyed, and in some places the tindana was allowed to remain as a village chief under a Dagomba divisional chief. The Tamale chief known as the Dakpema appears to be a descendant of the earlier tindana. The imposition of new chiefs did not destroy the jurisdiction of the tindana. In fact the Dagomba chiefs assumed some of the authority of the earth priests.

#### Dagomba political structure

Dagbon has all the characteristics of a traditional state: territorial sovereignty, a political and administrative machinery, and of course a class system. Dagomba society consisted of two basic classes: the 'commoner' class or dagbandaba, and a ruling class of chiefs. Class membership has remained more or less hereditary from the very earliest days. With the exception of elders of the Ya Na's court and some chieftaincies held by descendants of earth priests, political office in Dagbon is monopolised by the descendants of the founders. The Ya Na, a figure surrounded by rituals of avoidance and deference, is the sovereign head of the Dagomba. He is also the lineage head of the dynasty and is responsible for appointing chiefs and elders for conducting the affairs of the state.

The Dagomba class system was not rigidly structured and it allowed a certain degree of interrelationship between the two main strata. Staniland has noted that intermarriage took place between the commoner and ruling classes.<sup>10</sup> This does not suggest, however, a convergence of the two strata; it is simply a manifestation of the non-rigidity of the Dagomba class system.

Dagbon was divided into a hierarchy of chiefdoms which consisted of three provinces - Mion, Karaga and Savelugu - ruled by royal dukes, i.e. senior chiefs of royal heritage. The importance of these three provinces lay in the fact that they constituted "gates" to Yendi. Thus one had to be an occupant of one of these skins or "gates" in order to qualify for selection as Ya Na. There were also several units, or divisions - twelve in number - which were ruled by dukes. Each division was subdivided into a number of villages, each having its own chief. Thus, an hierarchical system of rule developed in Dagbon starting at the lowest level with the village chief, progressing to the divisional and provincial levels, and culminating with the Ya Na.

The system of chiefly promotion or appointment was an important feature of Dagomba politics. Generally speaking a candidate started with an appointment to a small village and moved upwards until he reached the divisional level. Depending upon his qualifications (and luck), a candidate might even reach the paramountcy. But promotion was limited by the important rule that no man could rise higher than his own father. As a result, only the sons of Ya Nas could aspire to become Ya Na. This rule has in recent years been manipulated by factional 'interests' so as to include the grandsons of Ya Nas. While chieftaincies were held predominantly by members of the royal family, there were other political offices in Dagbon that were held by commoners, especially those who could trace some links to earlier kings. These constituted the elders who,

in the case of elders of Yendi, were officially appointed by the Ya Na to serve in his Court. The divisional and village chiefs also had their own councillors. Every chief had his own court, consisting of a group of elders and other attendants who followed him closely and also depended upon him for spiritual guidance and material support, but who also provided the chief with a local power base. As Staniland has observed, these officials had immense power at court and acted as advisers, judges and patrons.<sup>11</sup>

The Council of Elders of the Ya Na consisted of some twelve main officials and about three or four minor ones.<sup>12</sup> The Kuga-Na and Zohe-Na were the two principal advisers to the Ya Na, while Mbadugu was the official linguist whose main responsibility was to conduct all audiences with the Ya Na. Some of these officials also had the additional responsibility of selecting a Ya Na. Among these were Kuga-Na, Zohe-Na, Mba Malle, Tuguri-Nam and Gomli. Besides, most of the Ya Na's elders acted as intermediaries for lesser chieftaincies. Zohe-Na, for example, acted on behalf of all the royal dukes, i.e. the Yo Na (Savelugu), Karaga-Na, and Mion Lana, as well as several divisional chiefs including Gushie-Na, Sunson-Na, Demon-Na, Yelzori Lana and Bamvim Lana. Kuga Na, who claimed to be a descendant of a brother of Na Sitobu, acted on behalf of some minor chieftaincies, but was also vested with the crucial role of administrator of state affairs during a period of interregnum.

The elders were therefore generally responsible for maintaining and protecting the authority of the royal court in the day-to-day government of the State. At the same time, their relationship to the King gave them a position of immense power and influence since they acted as patrons in his court. As a rule, elders extracted large sums in fees from chiefs before the latter were allowed an audience with the Ya Na. They also received a share of tax revenues paid to the king. One of the most lucrative sources of wealth and power, however, was from payments by

candidates seeking appointment to an important skin. In addition, some elders such as Kuga Na and Mba Malle directly appointed candidates to (lesser) chieftaincies for which they charged fees.

The influence of the Yendi elders has not diminished over the years. On the contrary, the political importance of some of these officials, especially the principal elders such as Kuga Na and Zohe Na, has been reinforced with the political and economic development of Dagbon. This process of change has involved increased communication between the central government and the traditional authorities, especially the Ya Na. But since the Ya Na can be reached only via his appointed officials, any developing relationship between him and the authorities could only have enhanced the position of these officials. As the secretary to former Ya Na Mahamadu Abudulai IV explained:

"The Ya Na does not have to take advice given by his councillors; his decision is always final. He is the one that the Government will listen to. But the elders are important, especially Kuga Na, Mbadugu and Zohe Na. They are experienced, sometimes more than the Ya Na, and he will always expect an opinion from them. But there are also occasions when the elders can take decisions without consulting the Ya Na. That is mainly when they involve matters pertaining to inferior chiefs."<sup>13</sup>

It was not only at Yendi that influential elders were to be found. Each division had its own Court based broadly on the Yendi model. Like the Ya Na's elders, these were generally recruited from outside the royal family. The elders of the divisional courts were also assigned roles similar to those of Yendi. For example the Wulana was broadly equivalent to Kuga Na, and functioned as chief administrator who supervised the work of subordinate officials. As at Yendi, the elders also took on the role of patron for chiefs, i.e. village headmen, visiting the capital. But as Staniland has demonstrated, there was one important distinction between the state and divisional levels of administration: there was no equivalent to the State Council at the divisional level. Instead, subordinate chiefs came to salute their

superior and discuss problems individually, with elders simply advising the divisional chief.<sup>14</sup>

### Political Instability in Dagbon

Despite its complex administrative structure, Dagbon was not a strong state, either militarily or politically. Its vulnerability was the result of two main factors. Firstly, it did not possess a strong and centrally-controlled army and was consequently weak in self defence, as demonstrated by its poor performance during the wars against the Gonja and Ashanti during the 19th century when it depended largely upon the services of mercenaries. Secondly, Dagbon exhibited strong characteristics of the 'segmentary state' as formulated by Southall.<sup>15</sup> The central government was limited in its capacity to control outlying centres of power. The Ya Na did not have an effective monopoly of force so that, as Staniland has pointed out, the institution of government tended to be replicated at lower levels.<sup>16</sup>

Rattray described Dagbon as a "loose federation of semi-independent provinces", each having its own ruler, and with the Ya Na as a kind of primus inter pares.<sup>17</sup> The constitutional weakness of the Ya Na was also emphasised by Eyre-Smith who wrote that the paramount chief had "little or no executive authority in the government of the semi-independent states" and received little or nothing other than occasional tribute, normally in the form of slaves, from his distant sub-chiefs.<sup>18</sup> The administrative independence of chiefs at the divisional and village levels has also been supported by Manoukian who writes that "decentralisation was the rule in the original native administration".<sup>19</sup> Under this system divisional chiefs were left to manage their own affairs with very little interference from the Ya Na. The divisional chiefs in turn left

the local affairs of the villages in the hands of sub-chiefs.<sup>20</sup>

As Staniland has already noted, there have been several recorded occasions when divisional chiefs or dissident royals took up arms against the king or called upon outside powers to intervene.<sup>21</sup> The procedure for selecting a Ya Na by providing consultation of divisional chiefs before the successor was publicly nominated could be seen, therefore, as implicitly recognising the danger of conflict. In principle a Ya Na could neither abdicate nor be deskinning once he had been appointed. There have been cases, however, when at least one Ya Na was killed by rivals (Sumani Zoli around the middle 19th century), while others have been threatened by intrigue and open rebellion.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, paradoxically, the vulnerability of the state was also the key to its survival. The disputes which were such a feature of its existence both arose from and validated its structure. Goody has demonstrated that where a large dynasty is involved in the military and civil government in a country, any element of ambiguity or uncertainty in the selection of a successor does not only provide "a spur to effort", but also "gives expression to the 'corporate' character of the royal kin group".<sup>23</sup>

Disputes over succession in Dagbon were structurally prescribed: the rule that the Ya Na should be chosen from three contenders - Savelugu, Karaga and Mion - allowed for competition, while that which prescribed that no man should rise higher than his father is said to have added "urgency" to the contest.<sup>24</sup>

Staniland has noted that the structure of selection was the result of persistent tension between senior and junior generations - between uncles who were anxious to secure titles for their lines, and nephews determined to succeed their fathers.<sup>25</sup> Such pattern was already evident in the 19th century, in the struggle between Na Yakubu's sons and their uncles, and the ensuing combat between Na Abudulai's son and his

uncles and cousins. The same pattern was repeated at lower levels in the competition for divisional and even village skins. As Staniland explains, "these were the dynamics of competition within the dynasty, supplementing (and to some extent coinciding with) the dynamics of tension between central government and the peripheral centres of power".<sup>26</sup>

#### Effects of External Wars

Eastern Dagomba was conquered at a later period than the West, and a final settlement took place around the seventeenth century when the capital was finally established at present-day Yendi. The Konkomba who occupied vast areas of Eastern Dagomba were pushed back by the conquerors. However, they were administered by the Dagomba, although never assimilated. But the threat to the Dagomba kingdom did not come directly from the subjugated Konkombas. It was created, instead, by periods of prolonged aggression from the Gonja and Ashanti.

The Gonja wars were caused by the seizure of Daboya, a town situated to the north-west of Tamale, by a Gonja overlord, Sumaila Jakpa.<sup>27</sup> Jakpa appointed his son as chief of Daboya and moved south to attack the Dagomba. Daboya was important both for its trade, especially in kola nuts, and as a main caravan route. As a result of its crucial economic importance the Dagombas were not willing to surrender it. But it was not until the early eighteenth century under the reign of Ya Na Zangina that the Gonjas were finally evicted from Dagomba territory.

Soon after the expulsion of the Gonjas the kingdom became subject to raids from the Ashanti. According to Fage, these raids were spread over a period of some fifty years.<sup>28</sup> These wars were caused by internal strife within the Dagomba kingdom when Ziblim, the chief of Kpatina who was a grandson of a former Ya Na, Zangina, invited the Ashantis to attack the reigning king, Na Gariba. The King was seized but later released

on the intervention of some Dagomba princes.<sup>29</sup> According to some authorities, the Dagomba in return were required to send to the Ashantis a fixed number of slaves, cattle, sheep and cloth to Kumasi each year.<sup>30</sup> An Ashanti representative was stationed in Yendi, and it was only about 1874, with the decline of the Ashanti power, that the tribute ceased.

During this period the Ashanti influence over the Dagomba must have been considerable. Both Wilks and Fage claim that Dagbon was made into a protectorate, the payments being a form of tribute.<sup>31</sup> According to Tamakloe, Dagbon was a "vassal state".<sup>32</sup> But some authors have argued that the Ashanti influence was more limited. Iliasu, for example, suggests that the relationship between the states was mutually beneficial. It is seen as one of "politico-economic symbiosis rather than conquest".<sup>33</sup> According to him, the Asantehene did not interfere with the internal affairs of the Dagomba, and the payments made were not tribute "but instalments for the ransom paid for the return of Na Gariba".<sup>34</sup>

The Ashanti influence had some effect upon the internal politics of the Dagomba since it gave rise directly to the creation of a wing of Ashanti-trained musketeers within the Dagomba army. This resulted in the formation of some chieftaincies (about five in number) with very strong Ashanti influence. These chiefs sat on stools rather than the skins used by Dagomba chiefs. Tait and Strevens also emphasise the prevalence of the Akan language in Dagomba military usage.<sup>35</sup>

One consequence of the Ashanti influence seems to have been the stimulation of factionalism within the royal family. According to Iliasu, the annual tribute was a significant factor in factional competition because of the immense opportunities it afforded for intrigues against the paramountcy:

"Unsuccessful candidates to the paramountcy, chiefs and princes who desired to court favour in Kumasi and others who, for a variety of reasons, wanted to score points against the paramount chief, invariably sneaked out to Kumasi where, with little

difficulty, they were able to persuade the Asantehene to be more assiduous in demanding slaves from Yendi." <sup>36</sup>

As we shall see, factional politics centring around the royal family came to dominate Dagomba politics from the early colonial period, but reached its culmination in the period following independence when national parties started to manipulate and exploit the various factions for political gains.

#### The Dagomba State under Colonial rule

A further major threat to the internal unity of the Dagomba State came with its partition in the late 19th Century. This was accompanied by a weakening of the authority of the Ya Na over his divisional chiefs. The partition had its origins in the settlement of two foreign expeditionary forces in the territory: the Germans in 1888 and the British in 1892. Treaties were arranged with both foreign powers. In 1892 the British expedition force made its treaty with the Dagomba as well as with other northern states including the Gonja, Grunsi and Mossi, while in 1894 the Germans made their own treaties with the Dagomba.

The formal partition of Dagomba finally took place in November 1899 under a convention signed with the Germans in which the British retained control over the greater part of Dagomba. Thus Dagomba was sliced into two parts: the Western part went to the British, while the Eastern part (with the capital Yendi) went to the Germans. By 1901 Eastern Dagomba was incorporated into an administrative division with Sansanne-Mango (now Togo), while in the same year Western Dagomba became part of the newly-constituted Protectorate of the Northern Territories under a Chief Commissioner answerable to the Governor of the Gold Coast. It was not until after the First World War in 1919 that the reunification of the two sections of Dagomba took place.

The partition of the Dagomba state was bound to have a devastating effect on the cohesion of the Kingdom. For fifteen years during the partition the Ya Na (who resided in Yendi) was officially denied authority over his chiefs in Western Dagomba which, as we have seen, constituted the greater part of the Kingdom. He was confined to the Mango-Yendi district of Togo in an area largely populated by Konkombas. Two of the most important provinces in Dagbon, Savelugu and Karaga, came under British control, as did some prominent divisions such as Tolon, Gulkpeogu, Kumbungu, Nanton and the better part of Mion. The importance of this apportionment of states lay in the fact that all three 'gates' to Yendi - Savelugu, Karaga and Mion - came under the control of the British. It is also important to note that during this period the Ya Na was referred to by the British as the 'chief' or king of Yendi, rather than of the Dagombas.<sup>37</sup> This was a highly unfortunate situation from the point of view of the royal government, and one, according to Staniland, which was rich in the "possibilities of intrigue".<sup>38</sup>

One consequence of this situation was the recognition by the British of the Yo Na (Savelugu) and the Karaga Na as paramount chiefs. A further result of this development was the arbitrary relegation of the divisional chiefs of Tolon, Nanton and Kumbungu under the Savelugu chiefdom with which they were previously of equal rank.<sup>39</sup> The humiliation suffered by these chiefs can best be understood if we appreciate that both the Tolon Na and the Kumbung Na were principal war chiefs of the Ya Na, while the Tolon Na was also his principal elder.

The elevated chiefs did not fail to exploit their enhanced status. The Yo Na, for example, brought several of the Gulkpe Na's villages under his own jurisdiction and established a suzerainty over Kumbungu. According to Blair, Nanton was given inferior status by the Yo Na and made to pay allegiance to him despite its superior position in the court of the Ya Na.<sup>40</sup> The Dakpema, who also laid claim to the paramountcy,

persuaded the British to move the administrative headquarters from Gambaga to Tamale because of the abundance of water there.<sup>41</sup>

The most long-lasting effect of the partition was on dynastic politics: indeed, the present dispute between the two branches of the royal family can be traced to this period. During the period of the partition, Dagbon was fairly stable as far as aristocratic politics was concerned. Between 1900 and 1917 the paramountcy was occupied by the Abudulai candidate, Alhassan, who had been installed by the Germans after having removed Ya Na Darimani. But as we have already seen, the Ya Na was virtually cut off from his subordinates as a result of the partition.

Nor was Na Alhassan in a position to advance the interests of his own gate. The British had imposed a ban preventing their chiefs in Western Dagomba from communicating with those in Eastern Dagomba, including the Ya Na himself. To enforce their command, they punished recalcitrant chiefs with heavy fines or imprisonment and, of course, the forfeiture of their skins. Thus Yo Na Mahama who was a brother of Na Alhassan, was removed from the Savelugu skin and jailed by the British in 1910 because of his communication with Yendi.

The Andani gate on the other hand was powerful in Western Dagomba. Mahama was replaced by an Andani Candidate, Bukari, as Yo Na. By 1915 or so, other Andani candidates had been appointed to key skins in Western Dagomba such as Sanerigu, Tampion, Zanballon and Kpatinga. These were important royal chiefdoms which qualified for the way to Yendi.

Meanwhile the Karaga Na Bukari Narkaw, who was a cousin of Ya Na Alhassan but who, technically, did not belong to either of the two contending gates,<sup>42</sup> was forced by the British to cease communication with Yendi. He turned out to be one of the most loyal supporters of the British administration which conferred upon him the title of 'paramount chief' of Western Dagomba. Under his assumed position he was made to

appoint an Andani candidate, Abudulai - Na Andani's third son - as Mion-lana, i.e. 'British' Mion-lana, in 1911 or 1912. At the same time, however, Na Alhassan appointed his eldest son, Abudulai, to the Mion Skin. Thus there were two Mion-lanas, both by the name of Abudulai, but one belonging to the Andani and the other to the Abudulai gate.<sup>43</sup> The 'British' Mion-lana resided in Western Dagomba, while the Abudulai candidate resided in Togo and was supported by all of Na Alhassan's chiefs and elders.<sup>44</sup>

However, it was not until the invasion of Northern Togo by the British in 1914 that the political reunification of Eastern and Western Dagomba took place and a 'settlement' of chieftaincy disputes was attempted. The partition had polarised the Dagomba chiefdoms into two political camps: one loyal to the Ya Na based in Yendi, and the other manipulated by the British Administration in Western Dagomba. The death of Na Alhassan in 1917 added to the confusion and, in a way, exacerbated the conflict over the two Dagombas within the British administration as represented by Armitage, the CCNT, on the one hand, and Poole, the District Political Officer (D.P.O.) on the other.

For several months after the death of Alhassan, Yendi was without a chief, while the two leading candidates, Abudulai the Mion-lana appointed by the British, and Abudulai the Mion-lana appointed by the deceased king, were bitterly engaged in competing to have their candidacy approved for selection. Armitage, who was in favour of promoting British interests, was in favour of the British Mion-lana; while Poole, who probably understood the significance of the Dagomba customs and constitution better, was for the Mion-lana appointed by the king. Eventually a compromise was reached and the CCNT agreed (reluctantly) that the regent Abudulai (the Mion-lana appointed by the king) be selected as Ya Na on condition that the occasion was not attended with the "ceremonies attached to the enstoolment of a king of the Dagomba", and

that he (Abudulai) promised to limit his jurisdiction to the former Togo side of Dagomba.<sup>45</sup> This arrangement was provisional pending the election of a king after the War.

Such policies on the part of the administration induced a feeling of quiet resignation and tacit resistance among Dagomba chiefs. They refused to co-operate with the administration over the selection of chiefs as demonstrated for example by the case of the Tolon skin in 1917 when the chiefs refused to nominate or endorse a candidate; and even more impressively in 1918 when the selection of the Karaga Na took place. The nomination was entrusted to Western Dagomba chiefs but, mainly because of the uncertain outcome of the peace negotiations, these chiefs were not prepared to commit themselves. The contest was mainly between Andani and Abudulai candidates, although there were two or three descendants of Na Yakubu who were also eligible. Eventually the CCNT was forced to select Ziblim (a son of the deceased Yo Na Bukari Narkaw, and a grandson of Na Yakubu), not because he was the most eligible candidate, but because he had promised to follow the footsteps of his father, i.e. to support the British administration.<sup>46</sup>

With the end of the War and the reunification of the former German side of Dagomba with the Western section, the way was now clear for the final settlement of the Dagomba paramountcy. The Abudulai candidate, who had been installed on a temporary basis as Chief of Yendi pending the final settlement of boundaries after the War, had very strong claims, not least his status as son of the deceased chief, as well as his good relationship with the Konkombas. But there were other candidates. Three other chiefs had some claim: Karaga Na Ziblim, Yo Na Bukari who was a son of Ya Na Andani, and the 'British' Mion-lana Abudulai, also a son of Na Andani. Among these candidates, the Yo Na had the strongest claim, but he had become very old and blind, thus making it impossible for him to conduct state affairs.

The elders were not consulted on the selection of the Ya Na, however, and traditional procedures were disregarded. The CCNT took it on himself to assess the various candidates at a meeting with chiefs held in Tamale in November 1920. The popular choice among the chiefs was Yo Na Bukari, but the CCNT advised against this choice on grounds of the chief's old age and infirmity.<sup>47</sup> He therefore recommended Abudulai (the Yendi chief) as the best-suited candidate to re-unite and consolidate Dagomba society.<sup>48</sup> But the CCNT went further than merely appointing a new king. He also attempted to solve the question of the Mion skin by making the appointment of the newly-installed king conditional upon handing over the skins of Mion to the British candidate. Naturally, this was not accepted. Thus the whole procedure was expertly 'stage-managed' by the CCNT, who boasted that he could leave the Northern Territories satisfied that one of his last acts had been to re-unite British and Togoland Dagomba, while he "begged the Chiefs to dismiss the past from their minds".<sup>49</sup>

Staniland had noted that the Dagomba political structure was neither destroyed nor systematically incorporated into the colonial bureaucracy. According to him, the latter did not have the resources either in manpower or money to allow it to exercise its authority except in the most general or superficial manner. As a result, chiefly authority survived.<sup>50</sup> There was also another important reason for the survival of the institution of chieftaincy: its spiritual and symbolic meaning to Dagombas. They saw their chiefs as an embodiment of ancestral values which possessed a capacity for sustaining their community spiritually, socially, and in other ways. Dagombas felt obliged, therefore, to resist any attempts to destroy what they perceived to be an integral part of their way of life.

The Origins of Gate Politics in Dagbon<sup>51</sup>

Traditional politics in Dagbon revolves around two chieftaincy factions: the Andanis and the Abudulais. This division was brought about by the pattern of succession which followed the death of a former paramount chief, Na Yakubu, who ruled Dagbon around the mid-nineteenth century. After his death, Na Yakubu was succeeded by his eldest son, Abudulai I, and later by another son, Andani II, who was born of a different mother. The observed tradition in selecting the Ya Na allowed only sons or grandsons of Ya Nas to succeed to the skins of Yendi.<sup>52</sup> The system of polygamy practised by the chiefs, however, posed serious problems as far as selection was concerned, since both sides were likely to have a wide range of eligible candidates for nomination to Yendi. Furthermore, even when rules were established for the selection of the Ya Na, these were not always consistent and were far from rigidly followed as each side pressed hard, often through violent means, to have its candidate installed on the vacant skin.<sup>53</sup>

Until 1953 the pattern of succession was based on a rotation system according to which descendants of the two brothers, Abudulai and Andani, were selected alternately. Under this system no gate had, in theory at least, been able to establish the permanence of its power and authority in Dagbon, although, of course, the length of a successor's rule could enhance its position considerably. In the latter respect the Abudulai gate had the overwhelming advantage, for between 1900 and 1969 their three candidates sat on the Yendi skin for a period of forty-nine years between them, compared with the Andanis' sixteen.<sup>54</sup> The significance of this pattern was that it enabled the Abudulais to create a vast number of nobles or sub-chieftaincies, which provided them with an especially firm power base in Dagbon.

From the mid-fifties onwards, during the reign of Na Abudulai III,

national-level politics had assumed an important role in the Dagomba traditional political system. The introduction of universal suffrage in the Gold Coast in 1954, and the advent of political parties trying to establish a foothold in the North, meant that the support of the paramount chiefs was crucial if aspirant politicians were to be successful there. The Convention People's Party (CPP) at first attempted to win Na Abudulai's support, but the chief was not prepared to commit his people to the independence movement with which this party was associated, on the grounds that the North was not sufficiently developed, either economically or politically, for his people to benefit from self-rule - which would effectively mean rule by Southerners. This was a view widely held by Northerners.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Na Abudulai identified (covertly) with the Northern People's Party (NPP), a party which favoured a federal arrangement if and when self-government was to be granted.

The refusal of the paramount chief to allow himself to be enticed by the CPP set in motion a series of political manoeuvres by that party which saw parliamentary candidates, both commoners and royals, switch allegiances while the CPP also started a campaign to have the Ya Na deposed on the grounds that he was not constitutionally enskinned and that he was old and deformed. In the end, Na Abudulai was forced by political pressures to capitulate, and several of his former supporters, including the Tolon Na who "crossed the carpet" in December 1958 upon the advice of the Dagomba State Council, joined ranks with the CPP. From that moment onwards, the precedent was set for national politicians to intervene in, and manipulate, the Yendi skin nominations, and every government since Nkrumah's CPP has had an effective hand in installing the Ya Na of the Dagombas. In 1974, Acheampong himself played a minor role in removing Mahamadu Abudulai IV (who had been appointed at the behest of the NLC) from Yendi into exile in Accra while the Andani

candidate, Yakubu, was being prepared for installation as Ya Na. This formed the basis of the Andani/Acheampong alliance in Dagbon which lasted until Acheampong's removal in 1978.

The intervention by national politicians gave an added dimension to the dispute, and the events of the sixties and seventies witnessed a level of activity hitherto unknown among supporters who desperately wanted to have their candidate appointed. As we shall see, supporters stood to gain immensely if a candidate representing their gate was actually installed into office.

#### The Nature and Origin of Prominent Andani Supporters

Although the Andanis had a large following in Dagbon - estimated at about fifty per cent - not all their supporters benefitted (at least directly) from the alliance with the Acheampong regime. The principal beneficiaries were the members of the Andani royal family (who were appointed to various chieftaincies throughout Dagbon) and prominent supporters, i.e. commoners. Of course, not all 'blood' members of the family held political office as chiefs; a number of their princes held positions as professionals, executives, or businessmen, while others held important military posts both locally and nationally. These together formed an important element in the network of Andani patron-client relationships.

As far as the prominent supporters were concerned, these included mainly members of the business and professional classes, although they might also include members of the 'intermediate' classes, such as clerks, artisans and small farmers. Commoners' support in preference for one gate over another was based on one or more of the following criteria: political orientation, religious affiliation, or family tradition.

Supporters did not become such only after a gate had been installed in power; their support for the gate of their choice might go back several years - long before the candidates assumed important offices in Dagbon. Before the Andanis came to power their supporters provided various services to members of the family, including transport and farming inputs, and, in some cases, cash donations. Candidates who were eligible for senior chiefdoms like Savelugu, Mion, Karaga and Gushiegu - the first three being direct gates to Yendi - were especially lavished with expensive gifts.<sup>56</sup> One of the earliest Andani supporters among the big Dagomba rice-farmers was Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, who was a regular visitor to the palaces of the Kumbung-Na (who subsequently became Yo Na) and Mion-Lana Andani (who was installed as Ya Na during 1968-69) when he was a government driver, and long before he was engaged in serious rice farming. His support for this gate was based on the belief, according to him, "that the Andanis were better leaders for Dagbon, and whenever they came into power there was always peace and prosperity among the natives".<sup>57</sup> Because of the limited resources at the time, Zakaria's "gifts" to the chiefs were moderate by comparison with those of the more affluent supporters. As he explained: "I did not have the means to give them big gifts like some of our wealthy supporters, but I carted their farm produce to Yendi and Tamale, and wherever they asked me to go".<sup>58</sup>

There were several other prominent rice farmers among the early and active supporters of the Andanis. Alhaji Huseini "befriended" Dakpema (Tamale fetish) in the early sixties, long before this chief was appointed to office, and was also paying homage to Mion-Lana Andani "long before he became Na (Andani III) in 1968".<sup>59</sup> After each harvest he donated part of his yield to these chiefs as recognition of his respect for them, and which they used to maintain their "status and prestige" among Dagombas. According to Huseini, such produce was generally sold by the chiefs and the proceeds used to purchase "small luxury items like radios, power

generators, refrigerators, and so on, or to meet other expenses befitting a royal dignitary".<sup>60</sup> Chief Farmer Yakubu, who was Chairman of the RGA during 1977/78, was also a "very close friend" of Dakpema since the 1950s, and in 1966, they both played a very active role in recruiting members for the Northern Youth Association (NYA) which was founded by Ibrahim Mahama.<sup>61</sup> Throughout the subsequent chieftaincy troubles in Dagbon, Yakubu joined with others like Ibrahim Mahama, J.S. Kaleem (a former regional Education Officer who was later appointed Zobogu-Na, a Tamale sub-chieftaincy), J.H. Allassani (a former Minister in the Nkrumah regime), and Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, as the most vocal Andani supporters in the North.

The continuous dispute between the two gates as to the legitimacy or constitutionality of the sitting candidate, and its spread into national politics via political patrons, especially during 1967/68,<sup>62</sup> resulted in each side being supported by highly placed officials in Accra. The disputes were often long and acrimonious, and had to be settled by officially appointed bodies, a process which took a heavy toll on each party's financial resources. Cash contributions came from all prominent supporters, including those who were later to become very big rice-farmers.

It was conceivable, therefore, that after the Andani candidate had been appointed to the Yendi paramountcy their most active supporters would, as a matter of consequence, be adequately compensated. Thus the benefits and privileges bestowed upon the prominent Andani supporters among the very big Dagomba rice-farmers during the alliance with Acheampong were a direct result of their earlier and sustained support for that gate.

#### Motivation, political behaviour and identification

The split of the royal family into two rival camps did not diminish the importance of chieftaincy to Dagombas to any significant extent. Its

social, political and spiritual values remained intact.

The importance of chieftaincy to Dagombas cannot be truly understood outside the context of these people's own experiences. Its values and real meaning to these people cannot be internalised by the 'stranger', and only the most methodical and perceptive of observers can hope to understand its impact upon the Dagombas and their motives for identifying with one or another of the rival gates. Mallam Seidu Alhassan, an Arabic teacher from Yendi, provided one account of the Dagombas' perception of chieftaincy:

"If you are a true Dagomba you must show respect for your chiefs. We see our chiefs as a link with our past. They represent all the mysteries of our wonderful past. They remind us of how dignified our leaders were, and of how they commanded the respect of their people. We look to them for guidance because through them the secrets and mysteries come to us ... all the secrets of the past. And if you have a right (i.e. honest) chief in the village it will enjoy peace and prosperity for as long as he is there. Everyone has to show respect to his chief, even the big men and the politicians come to pay homage.

In this school I teach the children about the Koran, not about Dagomba customs. They already know about that from their parents, from their big brothers and sisters, and even from the drums. They learn about their past in their everyday lives. All of us Dagombas know our history, and it is all about chiefs and respect for our elders. So if you take chieftaincy from us we are left with nothing."<sup>63</sup>

Thus according to Mallam Alhassan, chieftaincy is an embodiment of the Dagomba past, and chiefs are not only regarded as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment, but also as an instrument through which this society achieves cohesion and continuity.

The theme of continuity was also taken up by Zobogu Na Kaleem, one of the most literate chiefs in the North. According to Zobogu Na, one of the main characteristics of chieftaincy in Dagbon is its communal orientation: i.e. the ability to organise communities around individual chiefs who have kept the community intact by providing spiritual guidance and political leadership.<sup>64</sup> Such qualities have been especially important in view of the 'turbulent' nature of Dagomba history.

"The invasions of Dagbon by the Ashanti and others in the early days, and the disputes between Dagbon and the neighbouring states, or even between rival groups within Dagbon meant that there had to be strong leadership from the chiefs if our country (the Dagomba state) were to survive. Without such qualities from our chiefs Dagbon would certainly have vanished. The way and manner that our people depend upon their chiefs for leadership, spiritual guidance and for moral upliftment, I would say is a legacy of the past."<sup>65</sup>

The Zobogu Na also believed that Dagbon came perilously close to collapse during the early colonial period, especially during its occupation by the British and Germans. As he points out, the Dagombas were deprived of their king during that period of political uncertainty,<sup>66</sup> and it was only because of the profound trust which the people had in their chiefs, together with the chiefs' own respect for tradition and accountability to their subjects, that further political crisis was avoided and the possible dissolution of the state forestalled.

"Our chiefs and their people exercised patience, and in the end Dagbon became even stronger than before ... The present trouble in Dagbon (a direct reference to the Andani/Abudulai conflict) is not about whether or not our people have respect for their chiefs; it is about the right of selection ... Chieftaincy in Dagbon will always be, with or without conflict. There will always be disputes about rights because there will be several candidates who are eligible for selection. But, my friend, that does not take the meaning away from chieftaincy, and for hundreds of years to come, the power and glory of Dagomba chiefs will still be with us."<sup>67</sup>

The essence of traditional authority and its significance to Dagombas is hopefully elucidated by the above comments. These comments emphasise the fact that spirituality was one of the most important criteria on which support for chieftaincy was based.

But were Dagombas' motivation as regards support for, or identification with, their choice of gate based upon similar considerations as those for chieftaincy as a whole? As we have already explained, gate politics had its origins in the pattern of succession involving two of Na Yakubu's sons, Andani and Abudulai. Support for each line was hereditary as far as members of the family were concerned. It was also based on family connections through intermarriage between royal and 'commoner' classes.

As the practice became more widespread, each side built up a wider constituency of support based on such connections.

Gate support was to a considerable extent also influenced by sympathy. Dagombas supported a particular side because of benefits to their community or to themselves as individuals which they derived from chiefs belonging to either gate. The prevalent opinion among the subjects that prosperity in Dagbon is correlated with gate (i.e. Dagbon experiences prosperity only when their gate is in power) is an important factor determining support. Thus according to the testimony of some Andani supporters, the reign of their gate has always been marked by a period of affluence caused by increased agricultural productivity, while Abudulai reign is generally characterised by war and strife in Dagbon.

By the late 1970s, and perhaps earlier, political allegiance to one side or the other seems to have become fairly "fixed" for most supporters: sufficiently so as to prevent switches of support out of short-term economic or "patronage" considerations. As an Abudulai supporter explained:

"For a very long time the authorities have been trying to force us to bury our differences and support Andani. First it was Nkrumah, then Acheampong, and now Rawlings. But the politicians don't understand the magnitude of the problems which they have created. They sacked Mahamadu from Yendi and installed their own man from the Andani side. As far as we are concerned Mahamadu Abudulai is our rightful leader, and all our supporters know that an injustice was done. We cannot switch our support just like that ... We have to show respect to our leader. Before Mahamadu there was Na Abudulai, and before that was Na Mahama. All these chiefs had the support and respect of their people. So we the present generation of supporters have to stand firm and get our leader reinstated as Ya Na, so that Abudulai can regain power here in Dagbon."<sup>68</sup>

Thus it is quite clear from such comments that the main concern among Abudulai supporters was with the reinstatement of their gate to power. This theme, together with the notion of irreconcilability, were central to the political philosophy of Alhassan Ziblim, the former Sang-lana and secretary to Mahamadu Abudulai.

"When you talk about a coalition you must also imply the question of power-sharing. The Andani people are not interested. Their wish is for the Abudulai family to remain weak so that in the end we (the Abudulais) will vanish altogether. That would leave only their candidates available for selection as Ya Na. Even if we accepted the proposals of the AFRC we are still left with no guarantee that the dispute would be finally solved ... As far as we are concerned, our duty above all is to the Abudulai cause. We need to protect our own interest. Only when our chief is reinstated will we be in a position to negotiate. Until then I cannot see any realistic hope of the two sides forming a coalition." 69

The political considerations influencing gate support were not restricted only to Abudulai supporters; the Andanis also stressed the importance of power and authority, though from a somewhat different perspective. While the Abudulai side based their arguments on the need to regain power, the Andanis stressed the importance of its consolidation in Dagbon. According to Alhaji Salifu Abdul-Rahamani, a large scale rice farmer and very prominent Andani supporter, the control of political power in Dagbon had "strengthened the foundations of the Andani family, and guaranteed prosperity for Dagbon". 70 This supporter further argued that, since 1973 under Andani, the Dagomba state had become stronger politically, and that "there was greater cooperation between groups and government bodies". 71 He continued:

"Under Andani, Dagbon has received recognition throughout the whole of Ghana, and Dagombas are now playing a more important role in the affairs of the country. Our people know that it is important to continue to give their support to Na Andani because that way the whole country (Dagomba state) will benefit. Andani has brought development ... and we cannot ignore the opportunity to bring more improvement to this region. That is why I personally get so involved preaching to our people and the villagers about the merits of Andani rule." 72

However, as Mumuni Gariba, a nephew and secretary to the Kumbungu chief suggests, gate support need not be influenced exclusively by one single factor:

"People come to see my uncle for many reasons ... Some come because he will give them land to farm. Some officials come on business. Others come to show their respect, while some come just to keep company. Some, like you (the author) come from far away to ask him questions ...

"My uncle is a very powerful (influential) man and he has helped several local rice farmers to obtain loans from banks to run their farms. He also has very many friends in high places in Accra. These officials always come to greet him when they visit the North. When the people hear that these big men have visited the chief they feel very happy because they know that he is keeping high company which will be turned to the advantage of the village. For that reason, most of the villagers support him." 73

Gate politics is unquestionably a very complex (and intricate) issue, and the wide-ranging reasons given by supporters for their allegiance to their gate merely underlines its complex nature. What has become clear, however, is that gate support is basically hereditary, and that all other intervening factors merely serve as a means of reinforcing such a position.

It is important that supporters maintain their gate into power, because through this they will receive patronage. By its association with the central government the ruling gate made it possible for its supporters to gain access to funds and resources. Thus as a result of the alliance between the Andani gate and the Acheampong regime, supporters of this gate were in receipt of huge economic benefits, especially during the period between 1976 and 1978, which represented a period of expansion in large scale rice farming in Dagbon especially. The Ya Na exercised considerable influence in the distribution of resources by nominating or endorsing officials at key establishments concerned with the development of rice farming in particular, and of regional development in general. These included the Dagomba district councils, the State council, banks, farmers' associations, farming agencies, and several regional corporations.

The new importance or dimension acquired by gate politics in Dagbon was in a sense both the effect of the general economic development of the North in the post-independence period, and its incorporation during the mid 1970s into a wider political framework through 'annexation' of the Dagomba ruling gate with the central political regime. The

commercialisation of agriculture merely emphasised the political significance of this gate as influential members of the regime who were engaged in large scale rice farming in Dagbon developed a close occupational relationship with members and leading supporters of the dynasty.

Later in this thesis we will hope to demonstrate the inter-relationship between gate membership or support and successful rice farming in Dagbon, and also to show how political behaviour was determined by gate allegiance. But first we will consider economic development in the North more generally so as to place subsequent economic and political development in Dagbon in its proper context.

Notes to Chapter One

1. Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Change to Change: Modernisation, Development and Politics' in Roy C. Macrides and Bernard E. Brown (eds.), Comparative Politics: Notes and Readings, The Dorsey Press, Homewood, Illinois, 1972, pp. 407-25.
2. Joseph R. Gusfield, 'Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the study of social change', in Claude E. Welch Jr. (ed.), Political Modernisation, Belmont, California, 1971, pp. 47-62.
3. C.S. Whitaker, Jr., 'A Dysrhythmic Process of Political Change', World Politics, 19 January 1967, pp. 190-217.
4. The displacement model emphasises change at the expense of continuity and by which traditions are wiped out as societies develop. This is a legacy from earlier sociologists who conceived of change in terms of mutually exclusive attributes, whose shift from one to the other represented the process of modernisation. These include, among others, Tonnies (gemeinschaft vs. gesellschaft), Durkheim (mechanical vs. organic), Weber (traditional vs. legal-rational), and MacIver (communal vs. associational). Parsons' pattern variables is also of this same intellectual tradition.
5. W. Barrows, Grassroots Politics in an African State: Integration and Development in Sierra Leone, African Publishing Company: New York and London, 1976, p. 33.
6. For example see (1) D. Tate and P.D. Strevens, 'History and Social Organisation', Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, I, 5 (1955), p. 195.  
(2) G. Tranakides, 'Observations on the history of some Gold Coast peoples', Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, I, 2 (1953), pp. 34-35.
7. S.J. Eyre-Smith, A Brief Review of the History and Social Organisation of the Peoples of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Government Printer, Accra, 1933, p. 6.
8. J.D. Fage, 'Reflections on the early history of the Mossi-Dagomba group of States', in J. Vansina, R. Mauny and L.V. Thomas (eds.), The Historian in Tropical Africa, Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 177-78.
9. Phyllis Ferguson, Islamisation in Dagbon: A Study of the Alfanema of Yendi, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1973, pp. 21-28.
10. M. Staniland, The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 14.
11. Ibid., p. 17.
12. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
13. A. Ziblim, Yendi, 15 May, 1978.
14. Staniland, op. cit., p. 31.

15. A. Southall, Alur Society: A study in Processes and Types of Domination, Cambridge University Press, 1956, p. 248.
16. Staniland, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
17. R.S. Rattray, The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland, Vol. 2, Clarendon Press, 1932, p. 565.
18. St. J. Eyre-Smith, A Brief Review of the History and Social Organisation of the peoples of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Accra, 1933, p. 26.
19. M. Manoukian, Tribes of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, International African Institute, London 1952, p. 58.
20. Ibid.
21. Staniland, op. cit., p. 37.
22. Ibid.
23. J. Goody, ed., Succession to High Office, Cambridge University Press, 1966, p. 13.
24. Staniland, op. cit., p. 37.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. For a detailed discussion of Jakpa and the Gonja see I. Wilks, 'A note on the chronology, and origins, of Gonja kings', Ghana Notes and Queries, No. 8, 1966, and J. Goody, 'The Over-Kingdom of Gonja' in D. Forde and P.M. Kaberry, eds., West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century, Oxford University Press/International African Institute, 1967.
28. J.D. Fage, 'Ghana: Reflections on the early history of the Mossi-Dagomba group of states', in Vansina et al, op. cit., p. 180.
29. I. Wilks, 'The Mossi and Akan States 1500-1800' in J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder, eds., History of West Africa, Vol. I, London, 1971, p. 377.
30. See for example, I. Wilks, The Northern Factor in Ashanti History, Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1961, p. 14; A.A. Iliasu, 'Asante's Relations with Dagomba c. 1740-1874', The Ghana Social Science Review, Vol. I, 2, 1970, p. 56.
31. Wilks, (1961), op. cit., p. 14; Fage, op. cit., p. 180.
32. E.F. Tamakloe, A Brief History of the Dagomba People, Government Printer, Accra, 1931, p. 33.
33. Iliasu, op. cit., p. 54.
34. Ibid.

35. D. Tait and P.D. Strevens, 'History and Social Organisation', Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, Vol. I (5), 1955.
36. Iliasu, op. cit., p. 58.
37. Staniland, op. cit., p. 20.
38. Ibid., p. 61.
39. A.C. Duncan-Johnstone and H.A. Blair, Enquiry into the Constitution and Organisation of the Dagbon Kingdom, Government Printer, Accra, 1932, p. 12.
40. H.A. Blair, 'Notes on the Dagomba Constitution 1930', cited in Staniland, op. cit., p. 62.
41. Duncan-Johnstone and Blair, op. cit., p. 12.
42. Bukari Narkaw was the grandson of Na Yakubu who ruled Dagbon about the middle of the 19th century. He served as Karaga Na between 1900 and 1917.
43. The name 'Abudulai' was used both as christian name and surname, and was common to both gates. It was therefore not necessarily a means by which gate membership was identified. The nomenclature was further confused by the tendency of Dagombas to be called by their christian names.
44. Staniland, op. cit., p. 67.
45. Ibid., p. 69.
46. Ibid., p. 70.
47. Ibid., p. 74.
48. Ibid.
49. Cited in Staniland, op. cit., p. 74.
50. Staniland, op. cit., p. 76.
51. In addition to Staniland, op. cit., see the following for excellent accounts of the history and complexities of Dagomba politics:
  - a) S.M. Sibidow, Background to the Yendi Skin Crisis (Accra 1969);
  - b) P.A. Ladouceur, 'The Yendi Chieftaincy Dispute and Ghanaian Politics', Canadian Journal of African Studies, VI, 1, 1972.
 For a vivid account of the installation of a Ya Na and the traditions involved, see also D. Iddi, The Ya-Na of the Dagombas (Yendi Field Notes), (Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, and Programme of African Studies, Northwestern University 1969).
52. In Dagbon the 'Skin' is the symbol of chieftaincy authority. Dagomba chiefs always sit on their 'skins', and are usually 'enskinned' (installed), or 'deskinning' (deposed).

53. The traditional method of selecting the Ya Na was through the consultation of oracles by the kingmakers. The increasing tendency to dispute the Dagomba constitution by both parties who wished to promote their individual candidates led to central government intervention in Dagbon. In August 1960, Nkrumah introduced the famous Legislative Instrument, L.I. 59, with a view to alternating the succession between the two gates, but for reasons of convenience this system was not accepted by the feuding parties, and was finally revoked in 1968, by which time politicians had become fully instrumental in appointing their own nominees to Yendi.
54. See Table 1 in Staniland, op. cit., p. 19, for details of succession.
55. Throughout its annual sessions, the Northern Territories Territorial Council resolved against self-government for the people of the North. In June 1949, for example, the Tumu Na moved a resolution "that the Council (believed) that the time had not yet come for self-government without the help of the Europeans" (NAG, TNA 1/764). By 1953, however, Northerners had come to realise the need for self-government and independence for their country, but at the same time felt the need to improve the North "educationally, economically and socially" before committing themselves. Memorandum by the Northern Territories Territorial Authorities and Council on the Government Statement on Constitutional Reform; Tamale, 27/2/53. R.B. Braimah, Personal Files.
56. Alhassan Abudulai, who was appointed Regent of Savelugu after the death of his father (the Yo Na) in 1976, informed me that he (the father) was the recipient of several expensive gifts from his Dagomba supporters which included two horses, bicycles, cows, and several sheep among others. Interview with Regent, Savelugu, 30 June 1978.
57. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Tamale, 24 June 1978.
58. Ibid.
59. Interview with Alhaji Huseini, Tamale, 19 May 1978.
60. Ibid.
61. The NYA, which was originally founded in 1954 but declined during the late fifties after the Northern People's Party was set up, re-emerged in 1966, and although its objectives were economic and social, its main function was to lobby the NLC on behalf of the region. Membership was open to all, but the Association developed along strong political lines, and each of the Dagomba chieftaincy groups was strongly represented.
62. For a very well-documented account on the spread of the Yendi chieftaincy dispute into national politics, see Staniland, op. cit. pp. 149-151.
63. Interview with Mallam Seidu Alhassan, Yendi, 15 August 1978.
64. Interview with Zobogu Na, J.S. Kaleem, Tamale, 10 July 1978.
65. Ibid.

66. As we have already seen, the interregnum lasted between 1917 and 1920, during which the British failed to allow the selection of a Ya Na on grounds of political uncertainty caused by the partition of Dagbon. The disruption of this process meant that the administration later found it difficult to agree on the nomination of a suitable candidate since several of these representing various factions were pressing their claims.
67. Interview with J.S. Kaleem, op. cit.
68. Interview with Mohammed Darimanu: rice farmer, trader and transport owner, Savelugu, 9 September 1979.
69. These comments were made in response to the question "would it not be in the best interests of Dagbon if both sides buried their differences and formed some kind of coalition?"

In August 1979 the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) dispatched a delegation headed by Major Peedah to Yendi to address both parties in the dispute, and one of its recommendations was that both sides share equally between them all traditional duties and responsibilities. While the Andanis expressed their willingness to accept these proposals, the Abudulais rejected them outright on grounds that they were impractical. Interview with Sang-lana Ziblim, Yendi, 18 August 1979.

70. Interview with Alhaji Salifu Abdul-Rahamani, Tamale, 25 April 1978.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Interview with Mumuni Gariba, Kumbungu, 7 July 1978.

CHAPTER 2

AN OUTLINE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIOR TO THE ACHEAMPONG PERIOD

In this chapter we propose to examine first, the strategies that were adopted by the colonial government for the development of the North from about the second half of the colonial period and their impact upon traditional political structures there, and secondly, the country's economic performance during the period leading to the Acheampong regime. In this way the development of agriculture, and more especially rice production, will be placed in its economic context.

SECTION I: COLONIAL STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH

Early economic policies towards the North were dictated by two main considerations. Firstly, the Northern Territories were regarded as a source of cheap labour for the development of the more industrialised South. A system of 'forced' labour developed there during the 1920s by which the Northerners were compelled to devote a minimum amount of free labour for the construction of government projects.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the labourers, however, were recruited for employment in the South on public works, such as roads, railways and ports. A large number of Northern labourers were also recruited by the mining companies in the South, while many others made their way as migrant labourers on cocoa farms there. The competition for Northern labour, especially between the government and the mining companies, often resulted in bitter dispute and acrimony between the parties.<sup>2</sup>

The second consideration which influenced early economic policies in the North was its conceived role by the authorities as supplier of food to the South. Both these conceptions of the economic role of the North had long-term repercussions for its economic development, and even the decline of one of the Gold Coast's major industries, namely palm oil, from about 1890, and the concern by the colonial administration by 1925/26 of a possible failure of the leading industry, cocoa, did not lead to a change of strategy as regards the development of the North.<sup>3</sup> Policies remained piecemeal and fragmentary.

The administration of the Northern Territories as a protectorate also meant that it was further 'isolated' from the rest of the Gold Coast, and was never at any time incorporated within the framework of its general development. To make matters worse, the system of indirect rule practised in the North from about 1930 onwards, by which the local administration governed through chiefs, was not conducive to its economic or political development, as we shall see. This system was ideological in so far as it was set up to reduce the dependence of the protectorate on the more resourceful South, as well as being designed to produce a type of 'native' that was consistent with the perceptions of colonial rule. The policies adopted for the development of the North must therefore be seen in the broader context of the general politics of colonial development.

#### Early Economic Policies Towards the North

Initially the Gold Coast administration regarded shea butter as one of the most viable industries in the development of the North, but it also showed an increasing reluctance to finance it. Shea trees were found in large quantities throughout the North. Although demand tended to be mainly local there was in fact a southbound trade which declined steadily up to 1930, as indicated by Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1: Shea Butter Southbound Trade, 1924-1930

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount (tons)</u>
1924	16,530
1925	13,632
1926	14,592
1927	9,275
1928	6,574
1929	6,424
1930	<u>5,588</u>
Total	<u>72,615</u>

Source: Adapted from the Dept. of Agriculture Annual Reports, 1924-1930.  
(Note: Figures are for shea-butter kernels, and not the finished product.)

The gradual drop in the southbound trade did not, however, represent a decline in the production of shea butter as a whole, but rather an increase in local demand; in fact, more shea butter was being produced in the North. The Department of Agriculture estimated that in 1925 about 21,569 tons of the product was used internally, and a similar amount exported, making a total of 43,138 tons, with a production potential of 420,311 tons of kernel.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the 1920s the Government was still largely preoccupied with compiling reports on the 'possibilities' for agricultural development in the North. Policies regarding its development were influenced mainly by bureaucrats in Accra rather than the better-informed political officers of the local administration who, generally, showed a clearer insight into the problems and needs of the local people. Thus, despite the excellent prospects of the shea butter industry, and the strong recommendation by officers in the Northern administration, its development on a commercial scale did not take place as the government decided against it on economic grounds. The construction of factories in the North for its production was not considered viable.<sup>5</sup> The interest in shea butter was accordingly reduced to 'experimental' work.

The decision against the development of the shea butter industry exposed at the same time an important and fundamental difference of approach between rival factions in the administration. On the one hand was a 'conservative' faction headed by Auchinleck, the Deputy Director, which was opposed to the development of cash crops in the North, while on the other was a 'progressive' faction led by Knowles, the Director, which strongly advocated a policy of crop diversification for export. This internal struggle between the two factions persisted throughout the 1920s, and was clearly dominated by the 'conservative' faction which had the overwhelming support of the Governor, Guggisberg, who did not

only criticise the proposed development of the shea butter industry, but also expressed doubts about the "ability" of the Director of Agriculture for the attention he was giving "to the many new agricultural products of export value which have been the subject of experiment during the past few years ..."<sup>6</sup>

The policies of the central government as regards economic development in the North remained unpopular outside government circles and were widely criticised by nationalist politicians, local administrators, and private interests. For example, the United Africa Company (UAC), a private concern with growing commercial interests in Africa, challenged the policy of excluding the North from economic participation in the colony's development. The Company raised two important points: firstly, the economic instability of the country arising from its dependence on one main source of agricultural export; and secondly, the Northern Territories which comprised nearly one-half of the colony was contributing practically nothing to its welfare as a whole.<sup>7</sup> According to the UAC, investigations had shown that the North was capable of "rapid production of considerable quantities of groundnuts which, with shea nuts ... would constitute valuable export if means could be devised to effect cheap transport in the Gold Coast".<sup>8</sup>

Thus an important pre-requisite for the establishment of a profitable export trade, and the development of the North more generally, would be the availability of cheap transport to the South. As a result, the UAC called for an extension of the Takoradi/Kumasi railway line to the Northern Territories, but its construction there did not meet with the approval of the Governor despite the sound economic arguments put forward in its favour. As the company pointed out:

Everyone will appreciate your (the Governor's) desire to refrain from saddling the colony with heavier capital expenditure than

it is able to carry, but I hope you will agree with me that in the case of a newly developing country such as the Gold Coast one may take an optimistic view of its future possibilities, and with the port facilities now available at Takoradi, it must be in the interests of the colony to feed it with all the produce that can be economically brought to it.<sup>9</sup>

The government's main objection against the extension of the railway to the North was that the colony did not have the reserves to finance such a capital intensive project. But this was hardly a convincing line of argument since, under the Colonial Development Act of 1929, the Treasury had the power to make advances to governments of any colony for the purpose of aiding agriculture and industry, including the "improvement of internal transport and communication". As the UAC rightly pointed out, the continuation of the railway to the North appeared to be a case which could be brought within the provision of this statute.<sup>10</sup> But the government maintained its hardline policy and declined subsequent proposals from the Colonial Office for the implementation of any such project.<sup>11</sup>

#### Alternative Cropping Strategies

Shea butter was not the only potential export crop to be considered by the authorities for the development of the North; cotton and ground-nuts were also regarded at one time or another as being potentially capable of generating economic development there, although initially doubts were expressed about the viability of cotton. Early interest was confined to experiments, and these were carried out mainly in Togoland.

The early doubts about the prospects of cotton as an important export crop were based upon the uncertainty of the world trade and the instability of prices on the whole. Although prices were favourable during the early 1920s, the Colonial Office had serious reservations about the commercialisation of the industry, since it believed that the enhanced

cotton prices could hardly remain permanent.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, early interest in cotton was confined to experimentation.

By the late 1920s, however, interest in the industry was revived mainly because of the advantages to the British (Lancashire) trade. In view of the natives' experience with the crop, the North was regarded as being ideally suited for its cultivation.<sup>13</sup> According to the Director of Agriculture, the main requirements for the establishment of the industry there were the distribution of a suitable seed and a guaranteed price for the product.<sup>14</sup> The local administration was highly enthusiastic about the prospect of an export industry being established in the North, and despite financial constraints, a campaign was launched to instruct the natives on the use of improved techniques of cultivation.<sup>15</sup> Achievement was, however, very limited due to the lack of funds from the central authorities, and for the rest of the colonial period cotton development in the North merely continued "under investigation".<sup>16</sup>

The development of new export crops in the North was bound to be affected by the relatively low level of expenditure on agriculture. Between 1931/32 and 1944/45, total expenditure remained more or less constant, with slight fluctuations between years (Table 2.2); and if we consider that cocoa, the main export crop, constituted by far the largest single item of expenditure, the amount made available to the development of commercial crop industries in general, and in the North in particular, must have been negligible. In 1938/39, only £150 was voted for the shea butter and oilseed industries there, while £200 was allocated to mixed farming. Similarly, in 1941/42 only £44 was made available to these industries, and £45 (estimate) for each of the subsequent years 1941/42 and 1942/43.<sup>17</sup>

Groundnut production on a commercial basis was not seriously considered until the late 1940s when the Gonja Development Plan was

TABLE 2.2: Gold Coast: Expenditure on Agriculture (1931/32 - 1945/46)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount (Actual)</u>
1931/32	81,859
1932/33	74,412
1933/34	70,854
1934/35	77,280
1935/36	77,998
1936/37	80,939
1937/38	93,166
1938/39	100,215
1939/40	95,154
1940/41	88,106
1941/42	92,625
1942/43	74,853
1943/44	88,287
1944/45	92,545
1945/46	134,599

Source: Adapted from Gold Coast Estimates (Various).

proposed as a result of a report by the West African Oilseeds Mission.<sup>18</sup>  
 The project was to be set up in the Damongo area, and with the use of mechanised farming techniques it was estimated that approximately 200,000 tons of decorticated nuts would be produced annually for exports.<sup>19</sup> It would be organised along cooperative lines and would include three stages of development:- (1) the employment of paid male labourers; (2) the settlement on the land of the families of the labour force while it was

still directly employed as paid labour; (3) the emergence of permanent peasant communities.<sup>20</sup> The scheme, which would have started initially with 8,000 acres and eventually expand to over 224,000 acres, would cost an estimate £12, 717,800.<sup>21</sup>

Conceived by the Mission as one of the most ambitious schemes yet proposed for the development of agriculture in the North, the Gonja Development Plan (which was run by the Gonja Development Company) was actually launched in 1950, but not on the scale originally intended. The performance of the project was decidedly unsatisfactory with crops yielding extremely poor results. By January 1953 only 3,800 acres had been cleared, in contrast to the 100,000 acres anticipated by the original plan (See Table 2. 3 for the estimated production target). Furthermore, the project encountered several operational problems as machines started to break down due to their general unsuitability for the tasks undertaken. Man-power resources were also badly utilised. A total of seventeen senior (European) and fifteen junior (African) staff were engaged in addition to the several hundred labourers who were engaged every year. As La Anyane has noted, the senior staff were not trained agriculturists, and within a short time the failure of the project was so complete that by 1956 the Company was liquidated having achieved nothing except "extravagant expense" for the Ghana Government.<sup>22</sup>

The failure of the Gonja project reflected those of several other schemes introduced in the North at one time or another during the colonial period. Quite apart from the fact that these projects were not generally designed with the interests of the local people in mind, they also failed to take into consideration the cultural habits and 'traditional' arrangements of the people. The Gonja project, for example, took very little note of the fact that the area parcelled out for the scheme was one on which the people of Damongo relied heavily to satisfy their day-to-

day needs, and it required a letter of protest from the Yabumwura, the Gonja paramount chief, to bring this fact to the attention of the authorities.<sup>23</sup>

TABLE 2.3: Gonja Development Plan Production Target

<u>Year</u>	<u>Acreage Cleared</u>	<u>Progressive Total</u>	<u>Area under Groundnuts Progressive Total</u>	<u>Tonnage of Shelled Nuts*</u>	<u>Total Output Gold Coast</u>
1948	8,000	8,000	-	-	-
1949	4,000	12,000	4,000	1,000	2,000
1950	Nil	12,000	4,000	1,000	2,000
1951	Nil	12,000	4,000	1,000	2,000
1952	40,000	52,000	4,000	1,000	2,000
1953	100,000	152,000	24,000	6,000	12,000
1954	120,000	272,000	64,000	16,000	32,000
1955	120,000	392,000	104,000	26,000	52,000
1956	120,000	512,000	144,000	36,000	72,000
1957	120,000	632,000	184,000	46,000	92,000
1958	40,000	672,000	224,000	56,000	112,000
1959	Et Seq.			56,000	112,000

\* 4 Acres per ton

Source: Abstract of West African Oilseeds Mission (NAG, Tamale, TNA 12/84)

The most unfortunate aspect of the government's approach to the development of agriculture in the North was that for over thirty years during colonial rule it concentrated entirely upon trivial experiments at the expense of educating the people in better methods of agriculture, selection of soil, introduction of new crops, and so forth. The

Northern farmers received no significant benefit from the 'experiments' conducted at the stations. As the Acting CCNT summed it up, as far as the commitment to economic development was concerned, the situation in the North represented a "deplorable result".<sup>24</sup> One of the main criticisms of the government's policy was its continued tendency to ignore the fact that transport and communication were important to the development of the area. The communication system was so poor, that, according to some local administrators, it appeared to have grown on no special plan "dictated by economic considerations".<sup>25</sup> Policies were also criticised on the grounds that they took a "national park" approach view of development, which consisted of segregating the North from the "evil influence" of the South in order to let them work out a gradual, natural development.<sup>26</sup>

#### The Post-1930 Approach

From the mid-1930s onwards, there was a change in strategy as far as agricultural policy in the North was concerned. The Government adopted a policy aimed at improving the 'quality' of farming. Thus, the use of intensive farming techniques was advocated for the first time, and a campaign for the adoption of mixed farming was actively pursued. The Stockdale Report was one of the first to recommend this approach.<sup>27</sup> This Report served to reinforce earlier views that there was no hope of the Northern Territories producing a crop which could be exported outside the Gold Coast, and suggested that agricultural policy be directed instead towards the supply of the needs of the Ashanti and the Colony.<sup>28</sup> The earlier conception of the North as a supplier of food to the rest of the country was therefore revived.

Mixed farming had limited success in the North as a whole. With the exception of the Mamprusi district where the number of mixed farms increased from 335 in 1949 to 1,932 by 1956, the scheme was slow to take

off as suggested by Table 2.4. In Wa, for example, the growth of such farms remained more or less even from year to year, while in the Dagomba district (by far the most important farming area within the Northern Territories) growth was so restricted that by 1956 only 3 per cent of the total number of mixed farms in the North were actually established there.

TABLE 2.4: Adoption of Mixed Farms in the Northern Territories 1949-1956

<u>District</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>	<u>1956</u>
Mamprusi	335	612	810	1171	1245	1485	1629	1932
Wa	19	19	12	12	19	20	16	20
Dagomba	12	18	16	21	30	40	60	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>1204</b>	<b>1294</b>	<b>1545</b>	<b>1705</b>	<b>2012</b>

Source: Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports, 1949/50 - 1956/57

According to the Department of Agriculture in Accra, the success of the policy in the Mamprusi area was due partly to the transport and marketing facilities which were more advanced there than in the North-West, and partly to the more efficient operation of credit schemes by which farmers obtained bullocks and ploughs.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the credit scheme was not administered as efficiently in the Dagomba district (which had a better system of road communication than other parts of the North), and must be regarded as one of the main reasons for the comparative failure of mixed farming there.

The Dagomba Agricultural Loans Scheme was instituted in 1951 with a view to supplying cash to farmers for the purpose of buying bullocks and

agricultural equipment. A cash loan of about £30 was made to each farmer who was deemed qualified to receive it.<sup>30</sup> The scheme ran into difficulties very early on, the main problem being that farmers could not be trusted to buy stock with their loans as they tended to spend the money for other purposes. It was soon to be discontinued in its original form after several court cases for recovering loans, and in 1952/53 loans were given in the form of a pair of trained bullocks. Such mistrust in the Dagomba farmers (not necessarily an unfounded one) most certainly contributed to the failure of the policy of mixed farming in the district.

So far in this section the analysis has focussed on the general policies adopted by the colonial government as regards economic development in the North. But what impact did these policies make upon traditional political structures? In order to answer this question we will need to examine the relationship between colonial rule and chieftaincy. We will begin our analysis by looking at the role of chiefs during the colonial period.

#### Colonial Rule, Chieftaincy and Economic Development

Colonial rule was divided into two distinct phases of political administration: direct and indirect rule. The role of the chief was prescribed under each system. 'Direct' rule came into effect in 1902 when the Northern Territories were formally integrated into the British Empire, and continued until 1932 (when it was substituted by 'indirect' rule), by which time the administration had started to change its political outlook towards the North.<sup>31</sup> Direct rule was basically a system of rule through chiefs who were regarded as instruments for implementing government orders. Bening has pointed out that the influence and political importance of the chiefs in respect of their communities were quickly realised by the early administrators, and by

1898, Northcott, the first Commissioner for the Northern Territories, stressed the need to make use of them during every phase of the administration while supporting them widely, except in their relationship with neighbouring chiefs and of offences of a capital nature.<sup>32</sup>

The policy of direct rule was ruthlessly pursued by the administration without either regard or respect for the existing traditional order, and the authorities could appoint or remove chiefs at will, or even create new chiefdoms to suit their particular needs. Such a system of rule did not appear initially to come up against overt opposition from the natives themselves who were 'forced' into accepting it, and which caused the authorities to claim, mistakenly, that "the creation of chiefs by government over the tribes who originally recognised no chief, or where no chief could be found, has met with considerable success".<sup>33</sup> The practice by local representatives of the Government of creating chiefdoms of convenience was based upon a serious misunderstanding of the organisation of traditional society, rather than upon the alleged non-existence of such chiefs or chiefdoms. This misunderstanding led to a strange and often dangerous 'grouping' of tribes for purposes of administration and political expediency.<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, under such a system of administration chiefs lacked real authority over their subjects, and their ability to introduce social change - a capacity which they possessed in the pre-colonial days - was therefore severely restricted. One of the chiefs' most important functions during the pre-colonial period was the collection of taxes. Ferguson and Wilks have suggested that during the pre-colonial period the Dagomba had possessed a "quite complicated tax structure" which unfortunately was allowed to atrophy.<sup>35</sup> Under that system, which was pyramidal in structure, dues were paid by the people to the local chief, from local chief to divisional chief, and from divisional chief to the

paramount. In addition, there was a regular tax, or tribute, paid by each farmer at each of the five yearly festivals.<sup>36</sup>

Staniland has pointed to another important source of revenue in the North - caravan tolls - which was abolished in 1907 because of the government's desire to encourage trade in foodstuffs with the South. According to Staniland, "the immediate consequence of the abolition of caravan tolls was an enormous drop in the revenue of the protectorate which took twenty years to regain its level in 1907".<sup>37</sup> But these policies were deliberately pursued in the interests of the South, as remarked by one of the Governors of the Gold Coast, Sir Hugh Clifford.<sup>38</sup> The effect of these policies was to erode the influence of chiefs over their people, as indeed to weaken further the economic structure of the North.

#### Traditional Authority and Education

Education was regarded by the government simply as a means of providing staff for the local administration. With such a defined role, the scope for expansion was extremely limited, and education made no significant impact upon the North. By 1930, the year marking the 'official' end of direct rule there, only seven schools had been established throughout the whole of the protectorate - five government primary schools and two technical schools - and the number of children attending was still under six hundred.<sup>39</sup> As far as Dagomba was concerned, there were only two institutions during that period: the Tamale Primary School, which opened in 1909, and the Trade School which opened in Yendi in 1922, but subsequently moved to Tamale in 1927.<sup>40</sup>

Unlike the South during the early colonial period when education was for the greater part provided by the Missions, the North remained practically excluded from their influence. These Missions, especially

the White Fathers of Ouagadougou, were regarded with utter suspicion - a suspicion which, according to Bening, led to a restrictive educational policy up to 1957.<sup>41</sup> Objections were also raised against the Wesleyan Mission Society which, after first setting up a centre in Tamale in 1912, was compelled by government policy to withdraw, after only four years in the North.

The main objections to the Mission schools were both doctrinaire and political. The local administration argued that the time had not yet come for the protectorate to be opened to further missionary enterprise, and furthermore, it deprecated the introduction in the North of "numerous denominations" which tended to confuse the natives and which, it claimed, eventually played off one against the other to the "detriment" of the spread of Christianity among them.<sup>42</sup> The administration also expressed "grave concern" about what it considered to be "subversive activities" of the French-influenced White Fathers and the disruptive effects this might have had among the Northerners. It was not until about 1921 that the Missions were finally permitted to establish in Tamale, and even then, they were severely restricted by the requirements of the local administration as to their location and sphere of activities.

Education in the North only took on some significance in the mid-1920s after the Governor, Guggisberg, expressed an 'interest' in the area. Although there would be an enhancement of traditional institutions while maintaining a 'high standard' of education, there would be no great expansion of the school system. The number of schools would be limited both by the teachers available and the Governor's desire to concentrate resources on the building of Achimota College in the South.<sup>43</sup> Requests to open several schools throughout the protectorate were turned down for these very reasons. The first senior school in the North was not opened until 1927 in Tamale. Average attendance for all schools

remained very low (about 900 in 1932 compared with over 41,000 in the Colony of Ashanti), and expenditure on education amounted to £6,955 (compared with £168,130 in the Colony and Ashanti).<sup>44</sup>

The policy of limited educational expansion in the North was designed to prevent the growth there of an educated elite or 'scholars' as they were euphemistically known in the South, who became the champions of nationalism in the Gold Coast. It was carefully planned instead to produce a class of administrative 'auxiliaries' required by the government for the effective running of the local administration: teachers, clerks, works foremen, treasurers, policemen, and so on. Northerners were virtually excluded from secondary and higher education, and although a handful filtered through the system and attended Achimota and other secondary schools in the South, it was not until the early 1950s that the North had its first university graduate. The disparity between the North and South, not only in education, but as regards broad policies in general, has led some scholars to interpret the policies of the colonial administration as "deliberately isolationist".<sup>45</sup> They certainly contributed, both directly and indirectly, to the relative underdevelopment of the North at the time.

We have seen that during the period of direct rule chiefs did not play any important role in the administration of the Northern Territories. The failure to consult the traditional rulers of the people and to allow them a more prominent and responsible role in the running of their communities had serious consequences both for the relations between the chiefs themselves on the one hand, and between chiefs and their subjects on the other, as indeed for the effective running of the protectorate as a whole. Such belated realisation by the colonial government led first to the recommendation, and later the adoption of, the system of 'indirect' rule. Unfortunately, as we shall see, this system was restrictive,

since it narrowly defined and limited the role of the chiefs.

### The Chiefs Under Indirect Rule

'Indirect' rule was introduced in the Northern Territories during the early 1930s, and continued until 1945.<sup>46</sup> This system was based on the conception that African institutions were culturally distinct from European ones, and that the institutions of government most suited to the needs of the Africans were those devised by himself. For the first time, therefore, the colonial government acknowledged the authority and strategic importance of traditional rulers to the successful running of the protectorate. The new system did not, however, give power to the chiefs; their roles were strictly defined by law, and 'interpreted' where necessary by local political officials. Indirect rule was not a form of local self-government<sup>47</sup> as suggested by some, nor did it mean, as Crowder points out, the "government of African peoples through their chiefs".<sup>48</sup> Traditional rulers were given neither autonomy nor freedom to formulate or choose between alternative policies. Again, according to Crowder, what indirect rule did precisely was to lay heavy emphasis on the role of the chief in the government of African peoples.<sup>49</sup>

The Ordinances of 1932 set up Native Authorities under the paramount chiefs of the various districts throughout the North: Dagomba, Gonja, Mamprusi, Nanumba, Builsa, Tumu, Lawra, Wa, and Kassena-Nankanni. Each Native Authority was given jurisdiction over its own court (its power of jurisdiction was limited to certain types of offences) and treasury, as well as over a wide range of local matters including markets, lorry parks, and sanitation. By 1935 these responsibilities were extended to include primary schools, but were limited in scope. For instance, while the Native Authorities were required to erect buildings and provide school furnishings, meals, and clothing for the pupils, the government continued to provide teachers' salaries and school materials. Ladouceur has argued

nevertheless that the transfer of schools to the Native Authorities held a decidedly beneficial effect on education in the North, since five schools were opened there between 1934 and 1936, bringing the total number to twelve, while enrolment reached 1,430 by 1940.<sup>50</sup>

If the administration of education under indirect rule was considered successful, then that of tax collection must have been even more spectacular. During the early years of indirect rule the administration was indeed reluctant to introduce direct taxation, on grounds of general poverty in the North. Such a decision, however, must have restricted further the already limited opportunities for its development. By 1933, for example, the Yendi Treasury had a revenue of just £593, while the total receipts of the four divisional treasuries in the Dagomba district (Tamale, Savelugu, and Kumbungu being the others) came to only £1,672.<sup>51</sup> Their major item of expenditure involved the payment of salaries to chiefs and elders serving on judicial tribunals. When eventually the authorities were allowed to introduce a system of taxation in 1936, it proved so effective as to surpass the expectations of the local administration. The amount collected by the end of the first year of the experiment was £19,114 - nearly double the estimated amount - so that, according to Ladouceur, it led indirectly to the establishment of similar taxes in the South.<sup>52</sup>

The introduction of the tax did not remain a one-year wonder. Between 1937 and 1941, the government gave grants-in-aid in the region of £13,634, and the Dagomba Native Authority raised between £8,419 and £9,140 annually.<sup>53</sup>

Staniland concludes that in terms of the objectives of indirect rule, direct taxation was an undoubted success, "providing a substantial injection of money for Native Authorities and replenishing the strength of Dagomba chieftaincy, with all the implications this bore for politics later on".<sup>54</sup>

The introduction of indirect rule in the North was considered highly successful by the administration itself. The authorities were so impressed by the success of Native Authority councils that they even anticipated the establishment of a Regional Council of Chiefs in which they would meet yearly.<sup>55</sup> In fact the first such meeting, although largely an informal affair, took place in Tamale in 1938, and brought all the paramount chiefs of the Northern Territories together. Although the war interfered with the regular conduct of this meeting, the 1938 meeting was, however, the prelude to the Northern Territories Territorial Council which opened in 1946.

Despite claims by the authorities about the success of indirect rule in the North - and there is no doubt that some important gains were achieved in certain areas of administration - the system must be put into its proper perspective. The institutions set up by the government were not capable of transforming the socio-economic structure of the North. In the first instance, Native Authorities were not autonomous. Their powers were strictly defined and limited to keeping law and order, collection of taxes, supervision of markets, and the construction of schools. They were not allowed to formulate specific policies for the development of their districts; the chiefs were merely agents or, as Ladouceur has put it, "useful auxiliaries" to the district administration.<sup>56</sup> Secondly (and this point is not totally unrelated to the first), Native Authorities were operating within the framework of a broader political system which was not designed to let traditional leaders assume the role of political leadership within their communities, but rather to make them 'efficient' in their administrative functions. Colonial administrators observed very early on that indigenous political institutions were not conducive to their concept of rule, and therefore modifications were needed. Crowder has suggested that these modifications fell into two categories: first, those of traditional government that were repugnant

to European ideas of what constituted good government, and secondly, those that were designed to ensure the achievement of the main purpose of colonial rule which was the exploitation of the colonised society.<sup>57</sup> The most serious obstacle to the development of social change in the North was the absence there of an educated elite in general, and within the chieftaincy class in particular. Consequently, those very people who were entrusted with the task of running the business of Native Authorities and giving leadership to the Northern people, were seriously lacking both in intellectual and professional capacity. Unlike the South where the educated members of the community agitated and fought for social change, the uneducated masses in the North were by comparison both timid and conservative, and incapable of instituting social, economic, or political reform locally.

The policy of neglect and isolationism which characterised the North throughout the colonial period was conceived very early on. It was foreshadowed by Sir Frederic Hodgson, the Governor, who stated in 1899 that he would not spend upon the Northern Territories - the 'hinterland' of the Gold Coast - a single penny more than was absolutely necessary "for their suitable administration and encouragement of the transit trade".<sup>58</sup> The region was considered to be an economic liability for the rest of the colony, and this attitude prevailed throughout the colonial period. Only Guggisberg, who was Governor of the Gold Coast from 1919 to 1927, showed any 'interest' in the North, but his achievement was extremely limited, and his administration failed to establish even the basic foundations for the future development of the area. The policies pursued in practice, whether deliberate or as a result of inertia, were not conducive to the eventual transition to self-rule, with the result that the North found itself unprepared for the rapid, economic and political changes that took place after the Second World War.<sup>59</sup>

Agriculture continued to be the basis for the development of the North in the post-colonial period. But it was not until the 1960s that any serious attempt was made to incorporate Northern agriculture within the national development framework. Before we go on to examine the implementation of such policies, especially as regards the Acheampong era, we will first consider the development of the national economy during the twenty years or so since independence.

## SECTION II: THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ECONOMY FROM THE LATE 1950s TO THE ACHEAMPONG PERIOD

In Part I of this chapter we attempted an examination of the policies adopted by the government in its attempt to bring about economic development in the North, and the impact of such policies on the traditional political system. In Part II we will consider the general economic performance in the pre-Acheampong period with a view to placing agricultural development (and commercial rice production in particular) in the general context of the national economy. During the period under consideration economic performance was influenced by two ideologically opposite development strategies: the socialism of Nkrumah on the one hand, and the liberalism of the National Liberation Council (NLC) and Busia's Progress Party (PP) on the other. The analysis in this part of the chapter draws heavily from Killick.<sup>60</sup>

### Development Strategies in the pre-Acheampong period

Nkrumah attempted to transform Ghana into an industrial state by using socialist strategies which were laid down in the Seven Year Development Plan 1963/64 to 1969/70. The planners stated that Ghana

was undertaking a period of economic reconstruction and development aimed at creating a socialist society "in which the individual Ghanaian will be able to enjoy a modern standard of living in his home supplemented by an advanced level of public services outside".<sup>61</sup>

Under Nkrumah the state itself would play the major entrepreneurial role. Private capitalism (i.e. large-scale enterprises) was discouraged, whether Ghanaian or foreign, although Ghanaian enterprises were limited mainly to small-scale concerns. The direct participation of the state in the productive system was to be achieved by setting up new enterprises rather than nationalising private concerns. According to the planners, socialism should not be achieved by hindering the growth of the private sector, but by maximising the growth of the public sector. Nkrumah's instruments for effecting socialism included legislative controls on a number of selected areas such as imports, capital transfers, the licensing industry, maximum wages, prices, rents, and the power of the trade unions. The government's attitude towards private capital was nevertheless contradictory, and Nkrumah did not only fail to transform Ghana into a socialist state, but under him the economy declined rapidly.

The NLC which came into power in a military take-over in 1966, attempted to restore some 'order' or 'efficiency' in what they perceived to be a chaotic situation. Their main policies have been summarised as follows:-<sup>62</sup>

1. reduce pressure on demand on available resources, thus improving the balance of payments and easing inflationary pressures. Major cuts were also made in public sector investments.
2. a policy of 'cautious liberalisation' through which they tried (unsuccessfully) to abolish import, price, and exchange controls.
3. emphasis was placed on private enterprise, especially Ghanaian. Special measures were introduced to assist Ghanaian businessmen.
4. policy of obtaining external aid and debt relief from Western countries.

5. attempt to develop through measures like (a) stabilising the economy and improving the balance of payments, (b) creating an atmosphere of confidence conducive to private investment, (c) giving more assistance to peasant farmers, (d) strengthening the economic planning capabilities of the public service.

The regime, however, did not achieve its major objectives, and its policies were carefully formulated to undermine those of its predecessor. When the NLC handed over in October 1979 to the newly-elected Progress Party (PP) headed by Dr. Kofi Busia, it claimed that Ghana had achieved a sufficient measure of economic stability and a fresh basis for new growth, but as Killick points out, it still conceded that "major problems" awaited solution.<sup>63</sup>

The Progress Party government was generally in favour of private enterprise, though its overall strategy was ambiguous. For example, side by side with its attitude towards freer market forces, the party envisaged a large role for the state - an ambiguity which Killick notes was neatly illustrated by the statement pledging to move away from trade controls and those purporting to improve the enforcement of price controls.<sup>64</sup>

Busia's chief economic adviser and policy-maker was J.H. Mensah, whose major preoccupation was with issues of growth, employment and equality. It was Mensah's firm belief that after nearly a decade of stagnation Ghana needed more rapid growth and improved economic performance. The strategies adopted for dealing with these problems were however never clearly estimated, but four main imperatives are identified as follows:-<sup>65</sup>

1. to raise domestic investment and saving rates;
2. to expand export earnings and attract more external assistance;
3. to accelerate the 'Ghanaianisation' of economic activities;
4. to place special emphasis on rural development.

These objectives were taken to entail greater public investment, especially in agriculture and other rural programmes. While, however,

the state was supposed to play a greater role in the development drive, certain measures were adopted which partially dismantled the command economy. These included the rapid liberalisation of imports and an increase in the interest rates, a restraint on wages, and a substantial reduction of the real incomes of public servants in 1971. Besides, various small-scale business activities were reserved for Ghanaians while aliens were expelled from the country.

Busia's achievements as regards regulating the economy were no more successful than those of its immediate predecessors. A high level of public expenditure and a large import boom brought the economy to crisis point, and the government was forced to devalue the currency by a massive 90 per cent in December 1971. This resulted in sharp increases in the price of several food items (by approximately 50 per cent) as well as those of imported raw materials, machinery and equipment. These measures were also directly responsible for the overthrow of this regime by the military early in 1972.

So far in Part II we have provided an outline of the development strategies pursued by the different regimes since independence. We will proceed to examine briefly the general performance of the economy within the framework of such strategies.

#### Domestic Economic Performance

During the latter part of the 1950s the Ghanaian economy appeared to grow fairly rapidly - at well over 5 per cent between 1955 and 1960.<sup>66</sup> The country was well endowed with a healthy economic infrastructure while industrialisation was gathering pace. Investment was about 20 per cent of GDP in 1960, and domestic saving was sufficient to pay for most of it. Ghana at the time did not suffer from the serious foreign exchange

constraints of later years. Furthermore, prices were fairly stable, and the cost of living was rising only very slowly.

By the mid-1960s all that had changed; the economy failed to grow, and according to Killick, it might have even retrogressed.<sup>67</sup> It is estimated that the GNP per head fell from about  $\text{¢}$  140 in 1960 to under  $\text{¢}$  125 in 1969. During the first half of the decade, i.e. during the Nkrumah period, the GNP was estimated to be expanding at about 2.6 per cent annually, at approximately the same rate as the population growth. In the post-Nkrumah period, however, the position deteriorated rapidly, resulting in very little growth in total GNP, and a decline in GNP per head. Stagnation of growth occurred despite a massive development effort during the first half of the decade when the investment ratio was raised from 16 per cent in 1958/59 to 23 per cent in 1964/65 - considered to be an extraordinarily large figure by the standards of low-income countries.<sup>68</sup> It was of course Ghana's 'big push' period when it accumulated massive increases in capital stock. By 1966 gross capital stock stood at  $\text{¢}$  3,232 million compared with  $\text{¢}$  1,684 million in 1960.<sup>69</sup>

Despite such effort, Nkrumah still failed to produce economic growth either in the short-term or on a long-run basis. A simultaneous decline in saving ratios - for example net national saving dropped from 1.8 per cent growth in 1958/64 to 0.3 per cent in 1964/68 - had serious repercussions for economic growth, since it resulted in a growing gap between investment and domestic saving. The effect of such movement in savings was that by the mid-1960s about a third of gross investment had to be financed by capital borrowed from abroad, and which resulted in large balance of payments deficits. Busia's attempts to achieve higher rates of investment and growth in 1970 and 1971 were not matched by adequate measures to increase domestic savings, and led to further balance of payments crisis and inflation at home.

### Agricultural Production

Agriculture was one of the main sectors which was earmarked to benefit from Nkrumah's industrialisation strategy. Mechanisation would be introduced to revolutionise the structure of rural agriculture and improve farmers' living standards. Of course neither of these objectives was realised; on the contrary, the mechanisation of agriculture had the adverse effect of reducing agricultural output, and it is very doubtful (in view of increases in prices as a result of food shortages) whether farmers' living standards improved even marginally.

Under Nkrumah the state increased its participation in the productive system, including agriculture. The United Ghana Farmers' Council (UGFC) - the political wing of the CPP - was made responsible for organising farmers' cooperatives and providing agricultural extension services, while the State Farms Corporation was created to undertake food production. The Workers' Brigade and the Young Farmers' League also organised farms, while the Food Marketing Board was set up to fix minimum prices and improve the distribution of foodstuffs. Each of these organisations was run by party officials who were accountable to the CPP rather than to the farmers. Their policies therefore reflected the broad economic strategy of the government.

Another notable failure in the government's agricultural policy was to be found in the distributive system. Quite apart from a sharp fall in the standard of road maintenance, there was also a curtailment in feeder road construction as well as large reductions in the number of vehicles brought into the country as a result of the shortage of foreign exchange. Killick suggests that the declining distributive system gave a "very partial" explanation of the inflation of food prices. According to him, the periods when food prices rose more rapidly relative to other prices were 1963/66 and 1969/71 when the distributive system was under

greatest stress.<sup>70</sup> Falling output, however, contributed largely to rising prices.

The poor performance of the agricultural sector was due, in the main, to the inefficiency of the UGFC which lacked the necessary expertise, whilst its officials used their position to cheat the farmers who in turn became increasingly hostile to this organisation. Furthermore, the UGFC's task was made more difficult by the shortages of inputs such as fertilizers, seed and cutlasses, so that by the mid-1960s its services had deteriorated drastically.

It was Nkrumah's firm conviction that the provision of extension services and the use of mechanisation would radically transform traditional agriculture. According to him, the break with primitive methods could only be achieved through large-scale importation of foreign technology - tractors, combine harvesters, and so forth. But the successful adoption of mechanised farming techniques would depend upon several factors, especially the regular supply of spares and new machinery to replace the depreciating stock. In compliance with his new strategy, Nkrumah pursued his policy of mechanisation in agriculture and the task of implementing it was left solely in the hands of such organisations as the state-controlled UGFC which, as we have already seen, was entrusted with the running of mechanised cooperative farms, the Young Farmers' League which organised some settlement farms, the Workers' Brigade with 10 mechanised farms, and finally, the State Farms Corporation with 105 such farms.<sup>71</sup>

According to Miracle and Seidman, the UGFC's failure to establish successful mechanised cooperative farms was due largely to its failure in turn to deliver the tractor-ploughing services and other technical assistance which the farmers needed.<sup>72</sup> Socialised agriculture was also a failure from the point of view of its drain on national resources as

well as its general level of physical output. As Killick shows, although they were supposed to operate on a commercial basis, the state farms absorbed  $\text{¢}$  19.8 million in subventions during 1963/65.<sup>73</sup> Their failure in physical output was even more striking. In a comparison of the performance between peasant farmers and the state farms, Killick concludes that the state farms achieved lower yields and smaller outputs per man than peasant farms. The yield per acre for peasant farms was 0.94 tons as compared with 0.13 tons for state farms. As regards specific food crops, peasant farms realised superior yields in all main crops, such as maize, rice, yams and groundnuts.<sup>74</sup>

The failure of the state farms were not uniform; some of these, such as rubber and oil palm became viable, and did better than others, but even then, Killick argues, their failures were more evident than their successes.<sup>75</sup> The policy of post-Nkrumah governments - the NLC and the PP - was to keep those farms which showed some promise, and to close others. As a result, the number of state farms operating between 1966 and 1971 was drastically cut from 105 to 33, and even these did not perform well. By 1971 only a quarter of the available acreage was under cultivation, and the State Farms Corporation was making large financial losses - an average of  $\text{¢}$  1.4 million in 1969 and 1970.<sup>76</sup>

Briefly, then, the domestic performance of the economy was thus characterised by an overall lack of growth, and a sharp decline in agricultural productivity, especially in state-managed enterprises. The low productivity in agriculture meant that Ghana was forced to use a substantial amount of its dwindling foreign reserves to purchase foodstuffs from abroad, thus restricting further the industrialisation programme.

#### External Economic Performance

By independence, when the structure of the Ghanaian economy was in

the process of change - and becoming more capital intensive and taking in more government services - vast sums were required to finance the development programme. As Szereszewski has pointed out, resources needed to increase such capital investment did not come from a "progressive reduction of rival internal uses" but mainly from abroad.<sup>77</sup> As a result, the government incurred a growing deficit on the country's balance of payments from about 1959 in contrast to the previous years during which overall balance was maintained. The extent to which the external payments situation deteriorated from 1960 onwards is illustrated by Table 2.5 below.

TABLE 2.5: Summary of Statistics of Ghana's Balance of Payments, 1960-71 (Millions of Cedis)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Balance of Trade</u>	<u>Overall Balance</u>	<u>Current Account</u>	<u>Implicit Int. Liquidity</u>
1960	-10	-129	-70	544
1961	-72	-203	-219	325
1962	+13	-109	-12	313
1963	-41	-177	-102	211
1964	0	-130	-41	170
1965	-163	-310	-111	59
1966	-55	-173	-37	22
1967	+26	-117	-44	-22
1968	+59	-69	-6	-28
1969	+81	-70	-13	-41
1970	+143	-21	+74	33
1971	-36	-191	-94	-61

Source: Adapted from Killick, op.cit. p. 102 (Table 6.1)

Note (i) These figures were calculated on the basis of the exchange rate established in February 1972, i.e. £ 1.28 = \$ 1.00.

According to this Table, between 1960 and 1965 Ghana's estimated international liquidity balance had been reduced from £ 544 million to £ 59 million. At the same time, very large foreign debts had been incurred in order to meet the country's import bills, and by the time of the 1966 coup this had amounted to about £ 640 million. Killick argues that if all the debt and liquidity positions are taken together, the overall deterioration in Ghana's net asset situation was around £ 1,100 million, with the result that the country financed about two-fifths of her imports by running down her reserves and obtaining foreign credits.<sup>78</sup>

During the early 1960s when imports were still increasing, exports on the other hand were continuously declining as a result of a sharp fall in prices from about 1958.<sup>79</sup> While the decline of world cocoa prices led to a steady decline of the industry in the later 1960s, there were other dominant influences: the pricing policy of the Cocoa Marketing Board and, later, the overvaluation of the currency. At the same time other producer countries were still expanding their output, so that Ghana began to lose its former position as the world's leading cocoa producer. By 1970/71, it had contributed only 26 per cent of the world output, as compared with about 37 per cent ten years earlier.<sup>80</sup> The decline in the sixties of the cocoa trade, by far the country's largest earner of foreign exchange, together with the government's massive expenditure on foreign goods, had the effect of seriously weakening the balance of payments situation and plunging the country into serious financial crisis.

The NLC had considerable success in improving the foreign payments situation. They moved the trading account out of the red, and current account deficits were greatly reduced (See Table 2.5). These improvements were achieved while export earnings declined. Very large reductions were achieved in imports mainly through a combination of disinflationary policies at home such as a devaluation in 1967, and tighter control over licences. These measures had the important effect of reducing domestic

investment. But as Killick says, holding down imports was only a "palliative", and improved export performance was essential to any long-run solution of the payments problem.<sup>81</sup>

Despite the drastic measures adopted, the NLC still depended on large-scale external assistance, and obtained more aid and credit from the IMF. By the time Busia came into office in 1969, the balance of payments position appeared to have at least been stabilised, if not improved altogether. Cocoa exports began to rise both in value and quantity, in response to more favourable world prices. In spite of this situation, within two years the government was confronted with a severe payments crisis.<sup>82</sup> While cocoa prices (and hence export earnings) were returning to "historically more normal levels" - between 1967 and 1968 the average world price of cocoa rose by 58 per cent to its highest level for fifteen years - increased imports had absorbed most of the 'windfall' foreign exchange earned in 1969 and 1970; however, when exports declined in 1971, imports were not substantially reduced. After four years of surpluses the country experienced its third largest deficit ever on current account. Killick sums it up as follows: "reserves slumped, unpaid import bills piled up, and the IMF was sent for again. A desperately large devaluation in December 1971 was followed almost at once by another coup and Ghana's second 'democratic experiment' was at an end."<sup>83</sup>

It is against this precarious economic background that Acheampong seized power, and by which his programme of national reconstruction, most especially agricultural development, must be assessed.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. For a detailed analysis of the system of 'forced' labour as practised in the North of Ghana see R.G. Thomas, "Forced Labour in British West Africa: the Case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast", Journal of African History, Vol. XIV, 1, 1973.
2. For example, the representatives of the Mining companies forwarded a letter of protest to the London Chamber of Commerce (dated 3/3/1920) in which they complained about the unfairness of a decision by the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories (CCNT) to stop the Mines recruiting labour in the North. PRO, CO 96/619.
3. The concern by officials over the state of the cocoa industry was based upon "the excessively rapid growth of the industry", and its concentration largely in the hands of "illiterate African farmers with small holdings".  
The trade in palm oil had declined from £1 million to about one-tenth that value over a period of about forty years up to 1925.  
Memorandum on Agriculture from Governor dated 1/1/26, PRO, CO 96/662.
4. PRO, CO 96/662. "The Shea Butter Industry of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast"; Report by Captain G.C. Coull, B.Sc., Superintendent of Agriculture and Forestry, Gold Coast, 1925.
5. Several economic reasons were proposed for rejecting a fat extracting factory: (1) cost of transport of plant, (2) cost of sufficient supply of fuel, (3) the losses of the "very volatile" solvents used in the process of extraction, (4) cost of packing the product.  
Ibid.
6. PRO, CO 96/663. Confidential Despatch dated 13/4/27.
7. PRO, CO 96/693. Letter from United Africa Company to Governor Ransford Slater, dated 24/9/29.
8. Ibid. It should be worth pointing out that the attitude of the UAC towards the development of agriculture in the North goes against the general view that the European Companies "encouraged" the development of a mono-crop economy with no concern for diversification.
9. PRO, CO 96/693; op. cit.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. Memorandum to Sir B. Blackett, Colonial Office, dated 25/9/30.
12. PRO, CO 96/644. Colonial Office Minutes, 22/2/24.
13. PRO, CO 96/665. "Cotton Development in the Northern Territories and Trans-Volta", by C.H. Knowles, Director of Agriculture, 1926.
14. Ibid.
15. NAG, Tamale, TNA 1/92. Acting Commissioner for Southern Province, to D.C., Western Gonja, dated 30/4/28.

16. Ibid.
17. Gold Coast Estimates 1938/39 - 1941/42, Accra.
18. NAG, Tamale, TNA 12/84. The Mission was appointed by the Secretary of State and consisted of four members, all from the United Kingdom, but with limited experience of African agriculture. It spent ten days in the Gold Coast altogether and recommended two projects - one in the Northern Territories (Gonja), and the other in Northern Ashanti based on the same general principles. Its report was submitted in 1947.
19. NAG, Tamale, TNA 12/84.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. S. La Anyane, Ghana Agriculture: Its Economic Development from Early Times to the Middle of the Twentieth Century, Oxford University Press, 1963.
23. NAG, Tamale, TNA 12/48. Letter from Yabumwura to DC Gonja, dated 3/4/48.  
The Yabumwura pleaded that the area selected for the pilot scheme was the only fruitful land in the Damongo area: "I should therefore ask that three miles from the outskirts of Damongo from the area be voted for the Damongo farmers, otherwise Damongo citizens will be nowhere".
24. NAG, Accra, CSO/1237/30. Correspondence from Acting CCNT (E.O. Rake) to Colonial Secretary, Accra, dated 30/5/33.
25. NAG, Tamale, TNA 1/464. "Problems involved in the Development of a Backward Area and their Application to the Economic Development of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast" by H. Phelps, M.A., Assistant DC, Northern Territories (undated).
26. Ibid.
27. PRO., CO 96/731. "The Colonial Advisory Council of Agriculture and Animal Health" by F.A. Stockdale, Agricultural Adviser to the Secretary of State to the Colonies, 1936.
28. Ibid.
29. Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Accra, 1952/53.
30. NAG, Tamale, TNA 1/599.
31. Both Ladouceur ( Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana ) and Staniland ( The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana ) have written very detailed and interesting accounts of colonial rule in Northern Ghana.

32. R.B. Bening, "Foundations of Modern Native States of Northern Ghana", Universitas (Legon) 4,3,1975, p. 118.
33. NAG, Tamale, ADM 1/7; Asst. CCNT to Colonial Secretary, dated 21 July 1928.
34. Ladouceur (op. cit., p. 44) illustrates this point by showing how shortly after the conquest of the Tallensi in 1911 the British installed the Mamprusi Chief, Nayiri Mahama, to act as head chief of the Tallensi in order to overcome administrative problems. Soon afterwards he was given jurisdiction over "all lands situated within the boundaries of the north-eastern province" which included South Mamprusi, Bawku, Bolgatanga, Navrongo and Builsa ( a dangerous admixture of tribes) and which in fact had no real basis in pre-colonial relations. Traditionally the Nayiri is the head chief of the Mamprusis only.
35. P. Ferguson and I. Wilks, Chiefs, Constitutions and the British in Northern Ghana, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana (Unpublished version), p. 13.
36. Ibid.
37. M. Staniland, The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana, Cambridge University Press (1975), p. 44.
38. Clifford remarked that "the policy of abolishing the Caravan dues was deliberately embarked upon in the interests of Ashanti and the Colony, and it is these parts of the Gold Coast which have directly profitted by the sacrifices of immediate revenue to which the Northern Territories submitted ten years ago". (Cited in Ladouceur, op. cit., p. 44)
39. Ladouceur, op. cit., p. 50.
40. Staniland, op. cit., p. 54.
41. R.B. Bening, "The Development of Education in Northern Ghana, 1908-1957", Ghana Social Science Journal, Vol. No. 2, 1971, p. 33.
42. ADM 56/1/139, Letter No. 621/4/1912, dated 18/11/12.
43. Ladouceur, op. cit., p. 51.
44. Ibid., pp. 51-52.
45. See for example D. Kimble, A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928, Oxford (1963), p. 79.
46. The framework for 'indirect' rule was provided by three ordinances of 1932: (i) Native Authority (Northern Territories) Ordinance; (ii) The Native Tribunals Ordinance; (iii) The Native Treasuries Ordinance.

47. This conception of indirect rule is attributed to the American scholar Raymond Buell, who saw it as "immediate self-government in local affairs through native institutions constantly being strengthened by the accretion of new political experience derived from contact with the Western world ..." R. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, New York (1928), p. 718; cited in Yakubu Saaka, Local Government and Political Change in Northern Ghana, University Press of America (1978), p. 26.
48. Michael Crowder, West Africa Under Colonial Rule, London (1968), p. 169.
49. Ibid.
50. Ladouceur, op. cit., p. 55.
51. M. Staniland, op. cit., p. 92.
52. Ladouceur, op. cit., p. 56.
53. Staniland, op. cit., p. 98.
54. Ibid.
55. NAG, Tamale, ADM 1/319. CCNT correspondence to Governor Hodson, dated 11/10/38.
56. Ladouceur, op. cit., p. 42.
57. Crowder, op. cit., p. 169.
58. PRO, CO 96/357. Confidential Despatch from Governor to Chamberlain, 20/12/1899.
59. Ladouceur, op. cit., p. 61.
60. Tony Killick, Development Economics in Action: A Study of Economic Policies in Ghana, Heineman (1978).
61. Seven Year Development Plan 1963/64 to 1969/70, Accra, p. 1.
62. Killick, op. cit., pp. 55-56.
63. Ibid., p. 56.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., p. 57.
66. Ibid., p. 66.
67. Ibid., p. 67.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., p. 190.
71. Killick, op. cit., p. 192.
72. Marvin P. Miracle and Ann Seidman, State Farms in Ghana, Land Tenure Centre, University of Wisconsin, 1968.
73. Killick, op. cit., p. 193.
74. Ibid., Table 8.2, p. 193.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p. 194.
77. Szereszewski, "The Performance of the Economy 1955-1962" in Birmingham et al, A Study of Contemporary Ghana, Vol. I, Allen and Unwin (1966), p. 44.
78. Killick, op. cit., p. 101.
79. Szereszewski explains that the index of Ghanaian export prices showed a level of 117 in 1958 and 80 in 1962, compared with 100 in 1960. Szereszewski, op. cit., p. 44.
80. Killick, op. cit., p. 104.
81. Ibid., p. 106.
82. Ibid., p. 107.
83. Ibid.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE SMC, AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PATRONAGE IN NORTHERN GHANA

Chapter Two provided a brief historical analysis of colonial agricultural policies regarding the North, followed by a discussion of the economic performance of Ghana from the mid-1950s up till the Acheampong period. In this Chapter we are concerned with the broad strategies employed by this regime for the general development of agriculture, and of rice farming especially in the north of Ghana.

#### Acheampong's Policy of Self-Reliance

In January 1972 Acheampong overthrew the Busia Government and established the National Redemption Council (NRC). According to the soldiers, the Government had failed to improve the welfare of ordinary Ghanaian citizens and were found guilty of economic mismanagement. Whatever their real motives, the NRC leaders attempted to justify their seizure of power by condemning the 1971 devaluation of the cedi as productive of excessive economic hardships and as a surrender to foreign pressure. Shortly after coming to power, it therefore announced an alternative "package" of economic measures. These included a revaluation of the cedi which reduced the extent of devaluation to 26 per cent against the United States dollar. Restrictions were imposed on certain categories of imports which had previously been put on Open General Licence, while price controls were widely extended and included most motor vehicle components. Rents were frozen and restrictions placed upon increases in wages. The Government also announced its intention to reactivate various state enterprises left uncompleted or abandoned after the overthrow of Nkrumah. Regional Development Corporations were established in every region with the

stated view of promoting economic development there.

However, it was in its policies regarding agriculture that the new regime made its greatest impact. The basis of its agricultural programme was the joint policy of Operation Feed Yourself (OFY) and Operation Feed Your Own Industries (OFYOI). The stated objectives of the government's policy of self-reliance were three fold<sup>1</sup>:-

- 1) to produce more food to feed the people;
- 2) to produce locally more of the raw materials to supply factories;
- 3) to diversify and increase exports.

The government's approach to the development of agriculture more generally and rice farming in particular, was based on a policy of input subsidy. Rather than supplying the various inputs - fertilizers, improved seeds, tractor services, loans, etc. - at real cost and hoping that the high world market price would encourage Northern farmers to produce the crop, the government aimed to increase the supply of rice to urban markets at artificially low (official) prices, but nevertheless to make its production profitable through subsidised inputs.

All farmers were expected to participate in the new agricultural programme, including rice farming, but as we shall see, small farmers were not encouraged to participate in commercial rice production - the bedrock of the government's agricultural policy as regards the North - through the unavailability to them of vital subsidised inputs, including bank loans. They were expected to concentrate instead upon 'traditional' foodcrops, such as yams, maize, millet and groundnuts with a relatively low subsidy input, but which was considered to be less lucrative than rice.

Commercial rice farming, on the other hand, was reserved for large-scale producers who were recruited from an assortment of social categories: businessmen, professionals, high-level civil servants,

police and military officers, politicians, and so on. The emerging rural elite constituted also a large number of Northerners who were already engaged in food production. These local farmers did not start small, but had initial capital as well as important local business connections. As we shall demonstrate later, the most successful among the local (Dagomba) farmers were supporters of the ruling chieftaincy faction (which was also supported by the regime), and which gave them a decidedly overwhelming advantage.

Thus, although the OFY programme was intended to increase agricultural output through the involvement of the entire rural sector, it turned out in effect to be a policy which nurtured a new class of large-scale commercial farmers that thrived on vast state subsidies at the expense of small farmers. One consequence of this policy, according to Bates, has been "disparities of wealth, social status, and political power" within the region.<sup>2</sup> Later, when we consider the relationship between the big farmers and local institutions, we will hope to show how precisely this worked.

The SMC's expenditure on agriculture was indeed an indication of its commitment to develop this sector. According to the Five Year Development Plan 1975/76 - 1979/80, a total of  $\text{¢ } 999,065,876$  was allocated to agriculture, representing 25.5 per cent of total national expenditure.<sup>3</sup> Out of this amount,  $\text{¢ } 32,868,300$  was allocated to the Northern Region where no less than twenty-one development projects were earmarked, while  $\text{¢ } 67,902,500$  was allocated to the Upper Region to finance nineteen such projects (See Appendix I and II). A sum of over  $\text{¢ } 100.5$  million was therefore allocated to development projects in these two regions during the Plan period, representing 10 per cent of the amount spent on agriculture in the country as a whole. This amount represented by far the highest expenditure allocated to agricultural development in the North at any time.

This level of expenditure was not unrelated to the 'interest' which the regime had in the North. Several commissioners and high-level officials of Acheampong's regime were actually from the North, and had important social and political connections there. In fact the very nature of the schemes for increasing rice production - the distribution of subsidised inputs, mechanical equipment, etc. - was such that a great deal of 'discretion' was given to those officials who administered them and therefore tended to favour the politically well-connected. Of course it was not only Northerners who constituted the elite and privileged group of rice farmers there, but several others from the South, including Acheampong himself, and who between them had farms scattered throughout the North consisting of several thousands of acres. While these absentee farmers were in Accra or on duty their farms were being run by farm managers or appointed 'friends'.

Agricultural production was expected to increase rapidly in response to government policies. As well as boosting productivity, the OFY policy was also expected to conserve important foreign reserves through savings on food imports. The government even anticipated a surplus production of rice which could be exported to earn valuable foreign exchange. In fact in 1973, according to government planners, the country achieved a balance of payments surplus of  $\text{¢}$  143 million which they considered to be a reflection of the "sound economic policies" pursued by the government.<sup>4</sup> This assertion was however couched in propaganda, since the policies introduced in 1972 and in particular the OFY programme, could not have taken effect by then.

No doubt the successful implementation of the OFY policy, with its heavy emphasis on intensive farming techniques, rested on the availability of modern farm technology - agricultural machinery, fertilizers, etc. - which had to be imported. Thus the launching of this programme was

bound to make heavy demands on the country's foreign exchange reserves. In 1972, soon after the OFY campaign was launched, the government had the resources available from which to implement its policy, mainly because cocoa production, official sales and the world market price were all fairly high. This was also, of course, before the 'hiking' of oil prices by OPEC countries in 1974 which affected the country very seriously and substantially eroded its export earnings. In 1974, Ghana's imported crude oil was valued at  $\text{¢}$  140 million, and the government's financial position was far from being healthy. It was also directly responsible for forcing the government to remove subsidies on certain essential commodities which had hitherto amounted to  $\text{¢}$  28 million per year.<sup>5</sup>

The precarious economic situation had damaging effects on the implementation of the agricultural programme in the North. Far from staging a recovery from the slumps of the early years of the NRC, the economy continued to decline rapidly throughout the 1970s. As early as 1974/75 it had become clear that the government was in no position to implement its agricultural programme unless it received substantial assistance from foreign aid-giving authorities. The country's current account in 1974 recorded a deficit of  $\text{¢}$  212.4 million, and its net reserves fell from  $\text{¢}$  235.1 million at the end of 1973 to  $\text{¢}$  26.1 million at the end of 1974 despite heavy short-term borrowings from abroad.<sup>6</sup> The immediate effect on the agricultural development programme as a result of declining economic performance was an increasing shortage of imported farm machinery and spares, and virtually all other forms of agricultural inputs. By 1977/78 agricultural production in the country had declined considerably, and rice farming in the North had ceased to be a viable economic proposition to all but the biggest farmers with important 'connections'.

### Growth of Rice Cultivation in Northern Ghana

Ghana had long been an importer of rice. As we can see from Table 2.1, the quantity of rice imported between 1960 and 1974 fluctuated from one year to the next, but showed sharp rises in intermittent years, such as in 1962 when 70,697 metric tons were imported, representing an increase of nearly 50 per cent on the previous year; or in 1970 when an import of 53,122 metric tons represented another rise of nearly 50 per cent. The average yearly import between 1970 and 1974 amounted to 41,056.6 metric tons, with a CIF value of over 12 million cedis. This was a substantial increase on the previous five years (1965/69) when imports amounted to just over 35,000 metric tons per year on average with a CIF value of 5.8 million cedis. In view of the government's newly adopted agricultural policy of achieving self-sufficiency in food, such an increase in rice imports represented a severe setback and embarrassment. It was therefore important for the government to take a more serious look at its agricultural programme. From the early 1970s onwards, a number of agricultural projects were being set up throughout the country, especially in the Northern and Upper Regions. Most of these were officially designed to help the small-scale farmer improve his productivity. One of them, the Upper Regional Agricultural Development Programme (URADEP), by far the largest and most ambitious agricultural project undertaken in the country, will be discussed later in this chapter. Food crop production, and rice production in particular, was central to the development of these new projects that were mushrooming throughout the North.

Rice had been produced in the country for many years, but it was not until the mid-sixties, when mechanised farming techniques were introduced, that the crop was produced on a commercial scale. By 1960 only 1,950 acres came under mechanised production in Northern Ghana.<sup>7</sup>

TABLE 3.1: Ghana Imports of Rice: Quantity Value and Unit Value

<u>Year</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>CIF Value (1000)</u>	<u>Unit Value (C/M.T.)</u>
1960	28,780 (a)	3259.6	113.3
1961	46,337	5028.7	108.5
1962	70,697	7523.1	106.4
1963	26,357	2960.6	112.3
1964	38,329	3771.9	98.6
1965	29,599	3622.9	122.4
1966	48,200	6440.4	133.6
1967	39,400	6151.0	156.1
1968	30,100	6785.3	225.4
1969	28,064.8 (b)	6002.2	217.5
1970	53,122.0	10109.7	193.3
1971	35,109.5	5977.2	172.7
1972	24,268.8	6140.0	253.0
1973	53,573.8	17383.4	271.6
1974	39,104.0	20912.2	580.9

Sources: (a) Rice Statistics Year Book, WARDA, First Edition 1975, Table 11.

(b) The 1970 Ghana Agricultural Conference on Rice Production.

(c) External Trade Statistics 1969-1974, Central Bureau of Statistics, Accra.

As far as Ghana as a whole was concerned, the total acreage increased only gradually between 1940 and 1968 (see Table 3.2).<sup>8</sup>

TABLE 3.2: Rice Production in Ghana, 1940-1968

<u>Year</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Production(tons)</u>
1940	27,000	13,000
1950	49,000	22,000
1966	82,000	40,000
1968	113,000	54,000

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Accra. Proposal for a Rice Development Project in Northern Ghana, 1971.

Northern Ghana had been the main producer since the early 1960s. During that time most of the rice grown there was upland rice, and it was grown in mixed stands with other crops such as maize, yams, or millet.<sup>9</sup> Within a short period swamp rice replaced upland rice, and now rice is normally grown in pure stands. By 1970 there was a total of 78,000 acres of rice under cultivation (pure and mixed) in the two northern regions (See Table 3.3). Tamale, with 24,000 acres, had the biggest acreage under rice production throughout the entire North.

As far as the number of land-holders was concerned, out of a total of 60,800 in Ghana as a whole, 5,600 were located in the Northern Region (9 per cent) with an average of 6.4 acres of rice per holder; in the Upper Region, on the other hand, there were 37,000 holders (or 62 per cent) who cultivated rice, at an average of 1.1 acres per holder.<sup>10</sup> Thus, even if there were a larger number of holders in the Upper Region, the average holding there was significantly lower than in the Northern

TABLE 3.3: Area Under Rice Production - Northern and Upper Regions (Acres), 1970

<u>District</u>	<u>Pure</u>	<u>Mixed</u>	<u>Total</u>
Yendi	7,000	-	7,000
Tamale	24,000	-	24,000
Other Areas	5,000		5,000
Northern Region	<u>36,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>36,000</u>
Navrongo, Bolgatanga	18,000	1,000	19,000
Bawku	10,000	3,000	13,000
Other Areas	4,000	6,000	10,000
Upper Region	<u>32,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>	<u>42,000</u>
Total Northern Ghana	68,000	20,000	78,000
Total Ghana	96,000	40,000	136,000

Source: Adapted from Report on Ghana Sample Census of Agriculture 1970 (Table XI.7, p. 86).

Region. . . Given the necessary facilities and inputs, commercial rice production was likely to be more amenable to expansion in the Northern Region with its overall larger holdings. The total area under rice production in the North continued to increase rapidly, especially after the bumper crop of 1974. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the total area under rice cultivation in the North increased from 79,000 acres in 1973/74 to 107,000 in 1975/76, and reached 130,000 acres in 1977/78.<sup>11</sup> There were several reasons for this impressive increase in rice production in the North:

- 1) the introduction of subsidised mechanical equipment such as tractors, ploughs, combine harvesters, and land-clearing equipment which gave access to unutilised lands;
- 2) the availability of subsidised inputs such as chemical fertilizers and improved seeds;
- 3) the availability of cheap bank loans to large-scale producers;
- 4) the financial returns resulting from high input subsidies;
- 5) the social prestige and new status associated with large-scale farming;
- 6) the availability of large tracts of very cheap land due to a liberal system of land tenure.

#### Mechanisms for Implementing Agricultural Development in the North

Initial capital was one of the most crucial inputs for successful farming, especially rice farming, in the North. Commercial banks were advised to make cheap loans available to farmers, usually at 5 or 6 per cent below the market rate of interest. Farmers were also assisted by the Agricultural Loans Bank and the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) which were set up specifically to provide subsidised loans to farmers. While the commercial banks - National Investment Bank, Barclays, Ghana Commercial Bank, Standard Bank - provided mainly for the big (and well-connected) farmers, the state banks on the other hand, were supposed to assist the smaller ones, but as we shall see, small farmers, and small rice farmers in particular, were not given the level of assistance which they expected of these institutions.

Between 1970 and 1976 the assistance given by banks to rice farmers in the Northern Region increased substantially, both in terms of the number of farmers sponsored and the amount advanced in cash. According to Shepherd, 53 rice farmers in the Northern Region were in receipt of

loans from the Banks in 1970. By 1976 this figure had increased to about 753 involving some  $\text{C}\text{d}$  9.5 million.<sup>12</sup> The ADB was the largest single lender, supporting in 1976 a total of 360 farmers with a total credit advance of  $\text{C}\text{d}$  3.4 million.<sup>13</sup> Although the ADB had cut the amount of credit advanced to farmers to  $\text{C}\text{d}$  2.8 million in 1977, it had in fact increased the number of farmers receiving loans to 1,080.<sup>14</sup> The number of loan recipients, however, dropped sharply to 500 in 1978 with a total credit advance of  $\text{C}\text{d}$  1.6 million.<sup>15</sup> This cut-back in cash available to farmers reflected the policy of the banks in general to reduce credit in an attempt to check the rate of default among farmers.

Most of the loan recipients, however, were large-scale rice farmers. According to a sample survey of rice farmers conducted by Shepherd in the Northern Region, the majority of these - 78 per cent - were large-scale producers, i.e. with 50 acres or more in size. Shepherd also found that 44 per cent of these loan recipients came from the professional, business and senior military classes.<sup>16</sup> My own findings suggest that by 1977/78 the majority of farmers receiving assistance from the banks were those with important social and political 'connections', as we shall see later. Small rice farmers were virtually excluded from the aid-giving process, even by the ADB. Only 11.8 per cent of the small rice farmers in our sample claimed to have received any financial help in 1977/78.<sup>17</sup>

Chemical fertilizers were distributed locally by the Fertilizer Depot of the Ministry of Agriculture in Tamale. Such fertilizers were utilised in Northern Ghana only moderately prior to 1970, when the Ghanaian-German Agricultural Development Project (GGADP) started to instruct farmers in their use through demonstration farms. As a result of the GGADP's successful campaign, their application throughout the North became widespread and demand for this input increased rapidly.

Two types of chemical fertilizers are used by rice farmers in the North. The first type, N.P.K. (15-15-15), is applied immediately before planting at the rate of two bags (cwt) per acre. The other, sulphate of ammonia, is used as a 'top dressing' about six weeks after planting, and for this one bag per acre is recommended. As a rule, fertilizer is applied by 'broadcasting' - spreading by hand - except in the case of a few very large farms where seed drills are used.

The demand for fertilizers increased with the expansion of rice farming in the region. The Ministry of Economic Planning estimated that rice farmers in the Northern and Upper Regions would require 10,950 tons of this input in 1974/75 at a cost of  $\text{Ø}$  1.5 million, and increasing to 17,840 tons in 1978/79 at  $\text{Ø}$  2.5 million.<sup>18</sup> The Table below gives the estimated fertilizer requirements of rice farmers in the North.

TABLE 3.4: Estimated Fertilizer Requirements for Rice Farming in Northern and Upper Regions (in Tons)

<u>Variety</u>	<u>Year</u>				
	<u>1974/75</u>	<u>1975/76</u>	<u>1976/77</u>	<u>1977/78</u>	<u>1978/79</u>
N.P.K. (15.15.15)	7,300	8,590	9,900	10,950	11,890
Sulphate of Ammonia	3,650	4,300	4,950	5,480	5,950
Total	10,950	12,890	14,850	16,430	17,840

Source: Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale.

Fertilizer was heavily subsidised by the State, to the extent of 76 per cent in the case of N.P.K. which cost the government  $\text{Ø}$  12.00 a bag on the world market in 1977 but which was sold to the farmers at

¢ 2.80. This important and highly subsidised input was hardly available to the small rice farmers. In his study of rice farmers in the North, Winch advanced the following as the most probable reasons for low fertilizer use among the farmers there:-<sup>19</sup>

- 1) lack of funds;
- 2) inadequate appreciation among non-users of increasing yields if applied as recommended;
- 3) among the average farmer a belief that some fertilizer is better than no fertilizer;
- 4) a lack of appreciation that improved seed varieties require relatively high dosages of fertilizer in order to obtain good results; and
- 5) an inadequate input system.

While all of the above constitute plausible criteria for the low application of fertilizer among some farmers, especially the smaller ones, there was, however, another more fundamental one: the growing shortage of supplies from about 1976 caused by the declining economic situation. Government purchases were cut drastically and in 1977 and 1978 the shortages reached such crisis level that most rice farmers in the North, including some big ones, did not use any fertilizer whatsoever. Only those privileged and well-connected farmers were able to obtain sufficient amounts via 'contacts' in other regions. Any excess amounts that were obtained by these prominent rice farmers were sold to others at exceedingly high prices, usually four or five times the subsidised rate.

The use of mechanical farm equipment was one of the most important mechanisms for implementing a programme of large-scale agricultural production. These included land-clearing equipment such as caterpillars, combine harvesters, tractors and associated equipment - harrows, ploughs, seed drills. These services were provided by a

number of local agencies, including the Ministry of Agriculture, which was the largest individual stockist in the region. A number of private contractors were also engaged in providing mechanical services to farmers. All mechanised farm services were subsidised by the government. The Ministry of Agriculture subsidised tractor services, for example, by up to 50 per cent of actual costs.

Initially, land-clearing was undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture and was carried out by small tractors with conventional blades. By 1974 the GGADP provided the Ministry with a grant for a new land-clearing unit which included two caterpillar tractors, chain and ball-clearing equipment, land-clearing blades, two trucks to transport the tractors and other equipment, as well as associated equipment.<sup>20</sup> During 1974 and 1975 when most of the land-clearing in the North was done by the Ministry, farmers were charged  $\text{¢} 20$  per acre. From about 1976 land-clearing was increasingly being undertaken by private contractors, and during the 1977/78 season they charged  $\text{¢} 900$  per day. By that time about 70 per cent of all rice fields in the North was being cleared by mechanical equipment.

Tractor services were provided both by the Ministry of Agriculture and private companies, but most of the tractors in the North were privately owned. It was estimated that by 1978 there were about 600 private tractor owners in the Northern Region alone, although about 20 per cent of these were inoperative because of the lack of spare parts.<sup>21</sup> The majority of farmers, however, depended upon the Ministry or the private companies to prepare their land.

The biggest of these private agencies was the Development Mechanisation Company (DEMCO) which was based in Tamale with a fleet of 15 tractors and 10 combine harvesters. The company was established in 1976 as a result of a joint venture by two banks - the ADB and the

National Investment Bank - and a private company, John Holt. It was exempted from paying taxes for the first five years of business as a part of the government's policy of subsidising agriculture. Other agencies benefitted from the government's liberal farming policies. One of these, the Nasia Rice Company, formed in 1974 and owned jointly by Barclays, the ADB, the National Investment Bank and the National Credit Savings Bank, was also exempted from taxes for the first five years of business. The Nasia Rice Company owned all types of farming equipment, and although strictly speaking the Company's facilities were reserved only for its own 'pool' of farmers, consisting of fifty-six in 1978, it did, however, hire out equipment to the very influential farmers, especially those whose farms were situated close to its own.

Tractor services were provided to a more limited extent by some of the commercial banks, or by state agencies such as the Northern Regional Development Corporation (NRDC), the National Reconstruction Corps (NRC) and, as we have already pointed out, the Ministry of Agriculture. Private owners also hired out their tractors to other farmers. By 1978 about 90 per cent of the land prepared in the North was carried out by mechanical tractors. Charges varied considerably from one supplier to the next. In 1978 the Ministry of Agriculture charged  $\text{¢} 50$  an acre for ploughing and harrowing, while private contractors charged between  $\text{¢} 60$  and  $\text{¢} 70$  per acre. Private owners were the most costly, charging about  $\text{¢} 100$  per acre on average for ploughing.

#### Land Tenure in the North

Large-scale agricultural production, including rice production, did not depend entirely upon the availability of subsidised inputs; it depended to an even greater extent upon the availability of cheap land,

and farming on such a scale would most certainly not have taken place in Northern Ghana without the liberal system of land tenure that was to be found there. Prior to the colonial period land was not sold, but was regarded by the people as inheritable property. There was an attempt, however, which dates back to colonial times, to alter the structure of land tenure in the North, and which will be examined here in brief, because of its implications for the general development of agriculture there.

The need to control land use in the North led to the superimposition of modern land law on the traditional land tenure system when land there was vested in the government. The main reason for the colonial government's decision to control land in the North lay in its vision in the 1920s of the need to control certain lands for public use, such as railways, without adequate compensation. Although the construction of the railway to the North never materialised, the established colonial land law was never abrogated.

In 1927 a Lands and Native Rights Ordinance was proposed without consultation with Northern chiefs and people, and declared all lands in the North public lands;<sup>22</sup> but the government was subsequently forced to reverse its decision because of protests from Southern intellectuals and politicians, and the Land and Native Rights Ordinance of 1931 recognised Northern lands as 'native lands'. But as Agbosu has pointed out, the management and control of native lands was vested in the Governor in trust for Northerners.<sup>23</sup> Under the 1931 Ordinance the Governor was empowered to grant rights of occupancy to both natives and non-natives alike, and to charge rent in respect of such occupancy.

The 1931 Ordinance had important and far-reaching effects. In the first place it removed the management of land from the jurisdiction of chiefs. Secondly, the Lands Department (which manages land in

Northern Ghana) could claim land anywhere in the area for development purposes without payment. According to the Five Year Development Plan 1975/76 - 1979/80, this Department could lease to individuals and institutions interested in undertaking large-scale farming in the North.<sup>24</sup>

The 1931 Ordinance was repealed by the State Property and Controls Act of 1960 which preserved the control of Northern lands in the President. The position of the President as the 'trustee' of Northern lands was further enhanced by the Administration of Lands Act, 1962, by which he could declare any stool lands in Ghana as vested in himself to hold in trust by Executive Instrument. Further laws were enacted in 1963 - Executive Instruments Nos. 107 and 108 relating to the Upper Region and Northern Region respectively - which reinforced the powers of the President in regard to land rights.

The interest taken in Northern lands since independence was caused by the commercial importance of the area as a food producer. The State, especially under Nkrumah, needed to acquire vast tracts of land cheaply for the purpose of large-scale mechanised agriculture. Growing protests from politicians, intellectuals and Northern chiefs to have the earlier laws repealed and revert the land back to the traditional owners led in 1977 to the Commissioner for Lands and Mineral Resources setting up the R.L. Alhassan Committee to determine the ownership of land in the Northern and Upper Regions. The Alhassan Report, which recommended strongly the return of all Northern Lands to the traditional rulers, was however never published, and its findings were never seriously considered by the SMC.

The reasons of course were obvious. At that time most of the big rice farmers in the North were sponsored by the Acheampong regime. Many of these were 'alien' or 'stranger' farmers who found it difficult to persuade Northern chiefs - who for practical purposes were still responsible for the administration and management of the lands - to

release large tracts to them. It was commonplace knowledge that 'stranger' farmers objected to the tight control which some of the chiefs exercised over land in the area, and these formed part of a 'silent campaign' to have land in the North sold outright for purposes of farming. There was an equally strong lobby, however, which was opposed to "parcelling out land which would leave the natives eventually without adequate means of feeding themselves".<sup>25</sup> The 1979 Constitution, however, recognised the importance of Northern lands to the people and re-vested all lands to the traditional owners.<sup>26</sup>

#### Agricultural Development Agencies in the North

The GGADP, which was based in Tamale, was for many years the largest agricultural development project established in the North. This project started in 1970, and its main objective was to increase agricultural production through the distribution and application of fertilizer. Until the involvement of the GGADP, fertilizer use in Ghana was not common. Most of the GGADP's earlier activities were centred around the supply of fertilizers to fully mechanised rice farms. About 70 per cent of all fertilizers delivered into the Project went to these farms.<sup>27</sup> The GGADP later extended its scope to cover a variety of activities, as a result of which it came into contact with several thousands of small farmers.<sup>28</sup>

The GGADP, which by 1978 had become fully integrated within the Ministry of Agriculture, had by then handed over most of its activities to this Ministry, but continued to provide important services to the rural farmers, such as the supply of fertilizer, training in animal traction, the building of multi-purpose stores, silo building, and staff training. The Project was financed jointly by the government of Ghana and the West German government. The Ministry of Agriculture

allocated £ 150,000 annually for the purchase of fuel and lubricants and for the payment of Ghanaian personnel employed by the Project.

The Ministry was also responsible for the transportation of fertilizers and chemicals from Tema to the project areas. By 1976, over 30,000 tons of fertilizers had been transported at a cost of £ 1,200,000.<sup>29</sup> Between 1970 and 1978 it was estimated that about DM 30 million was provided as technical aid for the running of the GGADP. These funds were used for the importation of fertilizers and chemicals, provision of vehicles and animal drawn equipment, machinery and spare parts and, of course, payment of the German staff. Under the loan agreement between the Ghanaian and the West German governments a provision of DM 19 million was made for the importation of fertilizers.<sup>30</sup> While the Germans provided nearly all the money, its allocation was largely in Ghanaian hands, with the result that most of it was distributed among bureaucrats and their clients, instead of to the small farmers for whom it was intended.

If the GGADP pioneered a new phase in the rural development of Northern Ghana, the Upper Regional Agricultural Development Programme (URADEP), sponsored by the World Bank and the governments of Canada, Britain and Ghana, represented by far the most ambitious integrated agricultural development project to be established throughout the entire North. This project, which was fully incorporated into the Ministry of Agriculture in the Upper Region, became operational in July 1977 and had two principal objectives: (1) to increase agricultural production and consequently farm incomes; (2) to establish permanent farmer-support services. According to the planners, the project would achieve its objectives in two ways: first, by "redefining" the role of agricultural services and intensifying extension for crop and animal production and human nutrition; and secondly, by developing associated

physical infrastructure requirements of the region's farmers.<sup>31</sup>

URADEP was designed to be carried out over a five year period, and it involved a very complex farm development programme. Some of its main provisions were listed as follows:<sup>32</sup>

- (1) establishing 90 service centres at the rate of about 30 per year to provide extension services to small farmers throughout the Upper Region.
- (2) providing farm inputs, insecticides, improved seeds, fertilizers, spare parts, farm equipment, oxen, etc., through deferred cash payments or loans to increase production to 108,000 hectares. Crops will include millet, maize, sorghum, groundnuts, cotton, rice, cowpeas and tomatoes.
- (3) providing better animal health services and improved animal husbandry and establishing small ranches for local livestock owners.
- (4) developing several (seven) applied research and demonstration units along with a seed multiplication programme.
- (5) providing in-service training for project staff at the Navrongo Agricultural Institute.

The Programme also provided for the development of physical infrastructure such as the construction of small dams, village wells, project offices, houses for staff, strengthening the regional branch of the ADB, and establishing a Farmers' Services Company (FASCOM).

The cost of financing URADEP was estimated at  $\text{¢}$  64.4 million to be spread over a period of five years. Subscribers consisted of: the World Bank ( $\text{¢}$  21 million), the U.K. government ( $\text{¢}$  11 million), Ghana government ( $\text{¢}$  16 million over and above existing budget normally available for the Upper Region), and Financial Institutions of Ghana ( $\text{¢}$  10 million). In addition, technical assistance personnel were provided as direct aid by the British Overseas Development Mission, while the Dutch bilateral aid project, Training in Extension for National Development (TREND), provided about  $\text{¢}$  2 million spread over four years for the development of the Institute for Field Communication and

Agricultural Training (IFCAT) at Navrongo.

URADEP was both innovatory and revolutionary. There had never been such an all-encompassing scheme designed for rural development anywhere in Ghana. The significance of URADEP as a regional development agency cannot therefore be ignored. According to its chief executives, URADEP was regarded as a pilot project "designed to serve as a model for replication in other regions of Ghana".<sup>33</sup>

The Northern Regional Rural Integrated Programme (NORRIP)<sup>34</sup> was originally based on the URADEP model, and was designed to be implemented over a period of twenty years in four stages as follows:-<sup>35</sup>

1. Establishing the principles of development strategy to be used in the region.
2. Planning of development programme for the region.
3. Detailed project planning.
4. Project implementation.

The areas covered by NORRIP included agriculture (crops, livestock, fisheries, and forestry), infrastructure (water, transport, public health), training and education, and extension and community development.<sup>36</sup>

However, as soon as the Northern Regional planners realised the magnitude of the problems encountered by the URADEP, they recommended a less integrated programme than the one originally planned.<sup>37</sup>

URADEP did not make any serious impact upon the small farmers in the region. As far as these farmers were concerned, this project was a meaningless exercise, totally removed from their everyday experience. They remained uncommitted because URADEP did not appear to contribute anything to the improvement of their well-being. As one Bolgatanga small farmer explained, officials were more involved in "kalabule"<sup>38</sup> than in attending to the needs of small farmers.<sup>39</sup>

It is difficult to estimate what proportion of the 125,000 farm families in the region actually came into contact with URADEP, since

there was no reliable statistical information to go by, but the farmers maintained that officials' participation was minimal. As one Navrongo farmer put it,

I have never seen even one official of the World Bank on our farms. What I have seen is a film show about how to improve our farming. They are trying to educate us by showing us films, and a few months later they come back to ask about results ... How?<sup>40</sup>

These views were reinforced by a senior official at the Project's headquarters who admitted that URADEP had taken on more responsibilities than it could possibly handle. He indicated further that officials were not fully committed to the cause of the small farmers:

Many of them do not seem to understand what is expected of them, so they take a very casual attitude towards the work ... personally I would say that about seventy per cent of this project is being conducted in the comfort of the office and in officials' homes rather than on the farms.<sup>41</sup>

During the very few occasions when farms were visited by extension staff, the farmers were reluctant to accept advice from personnel who they considered to be ill-trained and inexperienced in the field. As the Regional Chief Farmer pointed out,

Which right-thinking farmer will abandon proven methods of agriculture for experimental methods? Our farmers want to improve themselves, but quite often the authorities believe those farmers have no ideas of their own.<sup>42</sup>

As far as the Chief Farmer was concerned, the whole project was conceived in an "atmosphere of unreality". As he argued, when in a few years time, the authorities would have taken stock of the "monstrosity" they labelled a development project in the Upper Region, "they will come to realise that the saddest mistake about URADEP was that it was devised and planned in Washington, and not in Bolgatanga".<sup>43</sup>

Although by the end of 1978 the planners in Bolgatanga had not conceded failure, they at least acknowledged "problems" confronting the Project. They admitted that it had not produced the desired effect upon the farmers in the region as a whole. One major setback, they

claimed, was the difficulty experienced in supplying inputs to farmers. The administrators also confessed to the obvious "lack of interest" on the part of the small farmers. According to Colonel Zanlerigu, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Project was still in its infant stages and it was "probably too soon to draw conclusions ... it could catch up later".<sup>44</sup> This is a significantly typical 'kleptocratic' remark. The failure of URADEP to make any serious impact upon the small farmers in the Upper Region illustrates the elitist nature of the scheme, but more specifically the failure of the planners to recognise the inevitable realities of implementation by Ghanaian officials. All the field officials for the project (and most of the top executives) were recruited from Ghanaian nationals who were either university graduates or members of the 'middle class' with solid 'connections'. As we suggested earlier, the amount of money coming in for this scheme was huge, and was used really as a 'kleptocratic bonanza'. The scheme was misconceived primarily in the sense that it underestimated the degree to which local officials would simply direct the funds and subsidised inputs to themselves and their big-farmer allies. It is in the context of this reality that the lack of meaningful contact with the farmers, and the latter's lack of adaptability, must be explained.

The GGADP and URADEP were potentially the two most constructive rural development projects to be established in the whole of Ghana at the time.<sup>45</sup> They were both intended to boost agricultural production and were regarded as the back-bone of the OFY policy in the North. While URADEP was generally considered to be a failure because of its lack of involvement with the farmers, the GGADP was considered to be far more successful. Of course the two projects were different in scope. While URADEP was a more comprehensive scheme incorporating the entire Ministry of Agriculture in the region (and consequently taking

on the function of that Ministry in addition to the new ones it created), the GGADP was more limited in outlook (if only by its gradual handing over of most of its original activities to the Ministry) and more specialised in its functions. Besides, and this is significant, the GGADP was manned largely by German personnel (who were not influenced by big-farmer allies) and assisted mainly by junior Ghanaian staff. It was therefore able to identify far more easily with the needs of the local farmers. The application of fertilizer use by small farmers was one of the GGADP's most successful activities in the North.

There were a number of other projects set up in the North for the specific purpose of improving agricultural production, and rural development more generally. Bullock ploughing was introduced to small farmers by the Christian Services Committee and the GGADP as a highly recommended form of "intermediate technology". This "technology" was in fact more adaptable to the Upper Region where it was more readily adopted. On the other hand, it was not considered to be either practical or effective by small farmers in the Northern Region. The purchase of animals and implements presented the farmers with considerable problems which the establishment of training stations in Nyankpala and Savelugu in the Northern Region did nothing to improve. The Banks were also unwilling to assist these farmers with the adoption of such technology.

The boring of wells in villages and the construction of dug-outs throughout the area were also considered an integral part of the rural development programme, and was undertaken by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Unfortunately, however, these schemes were not always co-ordinated within the framework of a regional policy, and in some cases appeared to exist in isolation. This point was emphasised by an official at the Ministry of Economic Planning who argued thus:

At the moment so many projects are being set up in the North that it is quite easy to lose track of what each one is doing. As far as the individual projects are concerned, they seem fine in the short-term, but we have to look at the development of the region on a long-term basis. It is for that reason that I believe so many of these schemes are a waste of human and government resources ... they just do not co-ordinate.<sup>46</sup>

Attempts made by the Ministry of Economic Planning to co-ordinate the work of the various agencies involved in agriculture locally did not receive the support of these agencies concerned. An OFY Committee set up for this purpose consisted only of organisations involved with rice cultivation, and furthermore very little success was achieved in its work.<sup>47</sup> The lack of co-ordination between agricultural officers or agencies was harshly, but deservedly criticised by an agricultural Monitoring Mission during its fact-finding tour in 1977. One of the main projects criticised was the Vegetable Oil Mills in Bawku, which led the Mission to view with deep "pessimism" the "condition of the greater part of the industrial backbone in the North".<sup>48</sup> The factory at Bawku was found to be completely dismantled and used as a store and groundnut purchasing centre. Its purchase of groundnuts in 1975/76 was 13,647 bags, but in 1976/77 only 279 bags were purchased despite the Ministry's target for the area of 63,000 acres of groundnuts in that year!<sup>49</sup> One of the main reasons for this sensational drop in official purchases was that the Oil Mills were paying considerably less than other purchasing agents.<sup>50</sup> This suggests, however, not just a lack of co-ordination, but rather a high degree of collaboration in smuggling and black market operations.

One of the most crucial observations made by the Monitoring Mission was that most of the projects established in the North were not subject to either regional or district control, and sometimes they gave the impression of being what the Mission called "the backyard gardens of a few officers concerned".<sup>51</sup> Such projects had little effect on the

situation of the small-holders, "the ones who really possess the key to the agricultural take-off".<sup>52</sup>

Out of a total of 50 projects visited by the Mission, an analysis was made of 38 of them. Of these, 24 were delayed (63 per cent), while just 14 were either completed or in progress. The Mission's analysis was further illustrated by the following observations:-

- (1) by 'in progress' we understand only the spending of money without any attempt at qualification.
- (2) the project shown as completed refer to the construction phase only.
- (3) of the 24 delayed projects, there are 15 of which almost nothing has been done (less than 30 per cent achievement). Most of the projects are nearer the zero mark. This means that on 40 per cent of the projects visited, project implementation has been zero.<sup>53</sup>

Again this suggests that funds which had been allocated to the implementation of rural development projects for the benefit of small farmers had been diverted for other purposes.

The point to be made about the implementation of projects and the agricultural development programme more generally is that while the authorities continued to stress the importance of these projects, there was no effective machinery established for their co-ordination and enforcement. Bureaucrats operating within a system of administration that was noted for its degree of corruption, or 'kalabule', were therefore free to handle public funds and other resources to serve their particular needs and those of their allies. In a sense the inward-looking, elite-oriented economic policies of the regime were responsible for the poor contribution made by the small farmers as far as agricultural production in the North was concerned. Their real purpose was to provide the means by which its supporters became 'big' farmers.

In discussing the strategies adopted by the SMC to implement

agricultural development in Northern Ghana during the 1970s (especially with reference to rice production), we have suggested that its policies benefitted a privileged group of farmers and bureaucrats, even though the development strategy was formulated (officially) to incorporate the small farmers. How precisely did the system work to favour these privileged groups? Furthermore, how did small farmers without formal contacts manage to conduct their commercial farming activities within a system that was institutionally so biased against them? In order to answer these questions we will need to understand the concept of patron-clientelism and its specific applicability to Dagomba society. It has to be pointed out that in this thesis we are not concerned with a consideration of patronage as a basis of power. We are concerned rather with the need to maintain one's gate into power, because through this one will receive patronage. The system of patron-clientelist relations prevailing in Dagbon was a rather complex one, and made even more so by the inter-relationship between chieftaincy factionalism, national politics and regional economic development.

#### Patron-clientelism and its relevance to Dagbon

Definitions of patron-client relations are varied, but all of these emphasise three important elements: inequality, reciprocity and proximity.<sup>54</sup> Patron-client relations are unequal since they develop between two parties which are unequal in status, wealth and influence. They are reciprocal since the relationship between patron and client depends upon the exchange of goods and services. Proximity suggests that these are based on personal, face-to-face relationships which produce a feeling of trust between the parties involved. Thus Lemarchand defines patron-clientelism as "a more or less personalised relationship between actors (patrons and clients), or set of actors, commanding unequal status

or influence, based on conditional loyalties and involving mutually beneficial transactions".<sup>55</sup> The same characteristics are pointed out by Scott, who defines patron-client relationship as "a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) used his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron."<sup>56</sup> Finally, Landé construes a patron-client relationship as "a vertical dyadic alliance, i.e. an alliance between two persons of unequal status, power or resources each of whom finds it useful to have as an ally someone superior to himself. The superior member of such an alliance is called the patron. The inferior member is called his client."<sup>57</sup>

The study of patron client relationships falls into two broad theoretical classifications: the anthropological approach is used to emphasise a particular type of relationship, such as kinship behaviour. In other words, the study of patronage as conducted by anthropologists focuses on how people of unequal authority, but linked through ties of interest and friendship, manipulate their relationships in order to attain their ends.<sup>58</sup> The political science approach on the other hand, conceives of patronage in terms of the ways in which party politicians distribute public jobs or other favours in exchange for electoral support. The political party is generally considered as the major unit in the use of this term. Thus according to Weingrod, patronage from this perspective is therefore largely "the study of how party political leaders seek to turn public institutions and public resources to their own ends, and how favours of various kinds are exchanged for votes."<sup>59</sup> But the two approaches are best considered as being complementary, as Bailey, a political anthropologist, has demonstrated. The study of patronage

from a political science perspective is the main subject of his work, Politics and Social Change, in which he examines how Indian villages relate to state bureaucratic institutions, and how state-level political 'machines' operate in the village context.<sup>60</sup>

The advantage of the above definitions is that they are broad-based, and include a wide variety of phenomena, while at the same time they distinguish patron-client ties from a number of similar-influence relationships. On the one hand they encompass traditional forms of clientelism in which the patron's superiority is based on some sort of traditional influence, generally stemming from landownership or religious status. They include, on the other hand, such modern-type phenomena as party-directed patronage commonly referred to as "machine-politics", i.e. organisations or systems of communication set up by a party through which it could distribute patronage.<sup>61</sup> Scott has suggested that the role of the patron should theoretically be distinguished from that of a party broker or boss. He nevertheless admits that it is quite possible for a single individual to act both as a broker and a patron, just as a boss may often function as a patron. As he has noted, "such a role combination is not only possible, but empirically quite common".<sup>62</sup> Indeed the experience of large rice farmers in Dagbon suggested that their easy access to the political leadership in Accra meant that they were generally able to accumulate sufficient personal resources to act as patrons to smaller colleagues, while at the same time acting as political agents or local brokers for the regime. These farmers were uniquely placed to function effectively in this dual capacity. Although they were not party workers - political parties having been proscribed under the military regime - their relationship with the regime was such that they were required to promote its image locally, recruit support, and help implement its policies.

The point however is this: whether of a traditional or modern

variety, a relationship can be designated as a patron-client relationship as long as it displays the elements of inequality, reciprocity and proximity. But the criteria of instrumentality and traditionality are also crucially important to patron-client relationships. According to Ozbudun, these attributes distinguish patron-client ties from certain types of relationships which, like clientelism, may also result in the political mobilisation of large numbers of people.<sup>63</sup> Kinship ties are among such mechanisms for mobilised political participation. But, as Ozbudun argues, they do not qualify as patron-client ties since, first, they are based on affective rather than instrumental bonds, and secondly do not typically bring together parties of unequal wealth and status.<sup>64</sup>

The above definitions make it necessary to qualify our use of the concept of patron-clientelism in regard to the relationship between leading members and ordinary supporters of the two chieftaincy gates. A patron-client relationship defined in such terms implies that the majority of ordinary people professed only conditional allegiance to one gate or the other, and were likely to switch their allegiance (eventually) if they failed to gain instrumental benefits. This, however, was not the experience of the greater majority of the Dagomba people, including the rice farmers. The relationship between leading gate supporters who were prominent rice farmers and ordinary farmers were conditional and instrumental only when they concerned supporters of the same gate. Although it has been known for some small farmers to "cross over" to a rival candidate who can promise help, this is nevertheless a rare occurrence and would involve only those people with a lesser commitment to their gate. As a general rule, Dagomba farmers did not switch allegiance to a rival candidate, since this would constitute a betrayal of their own gate and of their political beliefs.

The big rice farmers found it necessary to have a personal

following, not only for social prestige but also for political reasons: as a bargaining weapon against politicians in Accra. Thus the bigger their following, the more support they could promise, and consequently the greater the reward they could extract from the regime. Their "catchment" area or "constituency" was usually the village, especially those situated around their farms, but they might also sponsor smaller farmers from any locality within Dagbon.

As we have already suggested, patron-client relations do not always fall into neat categories, but often take a variety of forms, and there might even be some degree of overlap between one type and another. Dagbon provides a rich example of the variety of patron-client relationships that are possible within a developing society still strongly influenced by traditional values.

The dyadic-type relationship was by far the most common among the Dagomba rice farmers. These were generally relationships of a semi-permanent, i.e. long-standing nature, and consisted of what has been described by Landé as "horizontal" and "vertical" webs.<sup>69</sup> One example of the first type of network might consist of a straightforward exchange of one type of resource for another, such as the exchange of mechanical services (tractors and combine harvesters) for fertilizer or seed rice. Reciprocity was not necessarily restricted to a straightforward exchange of farming inputs. In fact many parties exchanged farm services for commercial products such as fuel and lubricants. Furthermore, transactions of this nature did not take place exclusively between farmers, but involved a wide range of participants, including bank managers, bureaucrats, senior military officers, executive heads of corporations, professionals and businessmen. It was a question of one's needs and what one had to offer in return. Thus a bank manager might allocate funds in the form of loans and overdrafts to a large farmer in return for which this farmer would cultivate and manage his farm while he attended

to routine business. Such an arrangement was particularly convenient especially as bank managers were not permitted by law to engage in commercial rice farming on grounds of professional ethics. They surmounted this problem by entrusting the running of their farms to appointed "managers".

The vertical-type network, on the other hand, involved a relationship between a rich and prominent rice farmer and those smaller farmers who depended upon him for crucial farming inputs such as tractor services, fertilizer and transport, and in return for which he received their political support. In this way the big Dagomba rice farmers, acting as brokers for the regime, were able to recruit and deliver a considerable amount of political support to their patrons in Accra.

While the dyadic-type clientelist network represented the predominant form to be found in Dagbon, there were several other patterns of patron-client relations involving rice farmers. One such type, commonly attributed to tropical Africa, is "mercantile clientelism".<sup>70</sup> Very little work has been done on the clientelistic relationships between town merchants and their peasant customers in Africa, and even less so as regards Northern Ghana.<sup>71</sup> Clientelism of this type involves a kind of personalised relationship between buyer and seller, or between merchant and farmer. The merchant does not only provide the farmer with his necessary supplies, but also buys his goods. Such relationships might extend even to the entire trading community. As Lemarchand points out, these reciprocities involve, besides material benefits, a sense of mutual trust between parties with the "landlord" or trader enjoying a certain amount of "credit rating" from his reputation of trustworthiness and reliability.<sup>72</sup> Such mutual trust as existed between traders and Dagomba rice farmers was of crucial importance to both parties since rice was traded 'illegally' between them at prices several times above the 'official' government price. But as far as those farmers who engaged

in the 'illegal' trade in rice were concerned, not only did such trade represent a profitable outlet for their produce; it was also a means of obtaining from traders cash advances which were used to finance their farming activities.

A further type of patronage associated generally with 'modern' society and which, under Acheampong developed to an unprecedented scale in Northern Ghana, was the system of 'brokerage'. The political broker or "boss" must be clearly distinguished from patron as used in the everyday sense. According to Boissevain, who makes the important distinction between patron and broker, patrons are those persons who dispense with first-order resources, i.e. resources which are controlled directly, such as land, jobs, funds, etc. Brokers on the other hand are those persons who dispense with second-order resources, such as strategic contacts with other people who control such resources directly.<sup>73</sup> In other words, the broker operates through his 'connections'. As Boissevain sums up, his role is that of "bridging the gap in communications between persons, groups, structures and even cultures".<sup>74</sup>

The concept of broker arises out of the role of the political or party leader in the socio-political structure. Such a leader does not deal directly with the masses but rather through agents or brokers. The crucial pay-off is not made to the party rank-and-file, but to the broker. The regime provides such brokers who may be a local boss, a labour leader, or some other functionary with personal benefits ranging from personal opportunities for wealth to access to more prestigious jobs. Brokers must be provided with resources so that they in turn can win the support of their followers. Most of the benefits which a party distributes to its brokers ultimately depend on favours secured from the government. Thus as Chalmers has indicated, the party's most important resource, therefore, is often its contacts with people who are closer to the centres of decision-making.<sup>75</sup>

It is, however, quite possible for a single individual to act both as broker and patron. As Scott rightly argues, the diffuse claims of the patron-client tie make it normal for the patron to act as a broker for his clients when they must deal with powerful third parties.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, if the political party simply gives the local patron direct control over its programmes and grants in the area, it thereby enhances his resources for becoming a patron on a larger scale, and eliminates altogether the need for brokerage.<sup>77</sup>

Although the regime is central to the concept of brokerage, this type of patronage could be dispensed via powerful individuals nominated by officials of the party or the central administration. One of the important characteristics of the Acheampong regime was its ability to operate via selected individuals representing the SMC's interests at the local level. Such individuals included leaders of regional organisations such as the Ghana National Reconstruction Corps (GNRC), the Special Marketing Unit (SMU), trade unions, and businessmen (and women) who had special access to Acheampong. In Dagbon the SMC's local interests were represented by the prominent farmers whose positions were enhanced by their membership of, or identification with, the ruling chieftaincy gate. These farmers were also leaders of the Rice Growers' Association (RGA) which also functioned as a political arm of the SMC. Furthermore, these farmers' leaders were given special access to other regional bodies and organisations, especially those connected with agriculture. Their proximity to local bureaucrats and bank managers meant that they were in an exceedingly strong position to negotiate aid both for themselves and on behalf of their clients. Most of the direct assistance given to Dagomba farmers was distributed via the RGA. Since such aid was monopolised by supporters of the leading members, i.e. those farmers with Andani links, its distribution became the central bone of contention between member supporters of the two sides in the chieftaincy dispute.

The sum effect of this strategy of aid distribution was to win political support for the regime among the substantial followers of the RGA leaders. For example, by 1977/78 when the Acheampong regime embarked on its campaign for the newly-proposed formula on Union Government<sup>78</sup> and was probably at the height of its unpopularity with a large and crucial section of the Ghanaian public, namely, the professional classes, it was important that it could fall back on support from other groups. It depended to a very large extent upon the rural populace for such support, and its strategy of appealing to this section via local agents or brokers was particularly effective in Dagbon.

Clientelism in Dagbon was influenced by both 'traditional' and 'modern' value systems. The pattern of interrelationship between the several types found there is in itself a measure of the theoretical complexities involved in an analysis of this concept. It is mainly for this reason that I have in future references chosen to refer simply to broad terms like "patronage" or "patron-client relations" rather than to more specific types.

In the following two chapters of this dissertation we will go on to illustrate the difference between small farmers' and big farmers' experiences in greater detail, and to explain the sources of the difference more fully. This will later lead to a consideration of the ways in which big farmers tried to exert pressure on the regime to protect and further their interests.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Economic Survey 1972-1974, Accra, pp. 1-3.
2. Bates, op. cit., p. 59.
3. Five Year Development Plan 1975-76/1979-80, Accra, p. 89.
4. Economic Survey, op. cit., p. 2.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 6.
7. Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale, 1978.
8. The reliability of these figures is questionable, but they are produced only to give an indication of the rate of expansion.
9. Irrigation was not practised in the North because of the very high costs and the lack of technical expertise.
10. Census of Agriculture, 1970, Ministry of Agriculture.
11. These statistics are again not reliable but are presented to indicate the overall rate of growth under Acheampong.
12. Shepherd, op. cit., p. 76.
13. Ibid.
14. ADB, Tamale, 1978.
15. Ibid.
16. Shepherd, op. cit., p. 84.
17. The extent to which small rice farmers were not given loans, and the attitude of the banks towards these farmers, will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3.
18. Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale, 1978.
19. F.E. Winch, "Costs and Returns of Alternative Rice Production Systems in Northern Ghana: Implications for Output, Employment and Income Distribution", Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1976, p. 19.
20. GGADP Files, Tamale.
21. Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale.
22. B.G. Der, "Colonial Land Policy in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1900-1957", Universitas, New Series 4, 2 (1975) pp. 127-142.

23. L.K. Agbosu, "Statutory Foundations of Land Administration in the Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana", in A.K. Mensah Brown (ed.), Land Ownership and Registration in Ghana, Land Administration Research Centre, University of Science and Technology, Kumasi (1978).
24. Five Year Development Plan 1975-76/1979-80, Accra, p. 11.
25. The Secretary to Northern Regional House of Chiefs, Mr. Seidu, was one of the best-known members of that group which included some very big Northern rice farmers.  
Interview with Seidu, Tamale, 30 August 1978.
26. Constitution of the Third Republic of Ghana, Accra, Tema, Ghana Publishing Corporation (1979), Article 188, Clause 1-4.
27. Ghanaian German Agricultural Development Project - Northern and Upper Regions: Short Summary of the Evaluation Report, p. 2; GGADP, Tamale, 1975.
28. The Project's main activities were summarised as follows:-
  - (1) complete take-over of fertilizer distribution in the Northern and Upper Regions (this function was handed down to the Ministry of Agriculture in 1976, but the GGADP still continued to supply villages with fertilizer);
  - (2) intensification of agricultural consulting aimed at increasing rice production;
  - (3) reactivation and expansion of Rice Mills (since 1971);
  - (4) setting up and expanding practical orientated research work;
  - (5) clearing and cultivating new land;
  - (6) introduction of data collecting.
29. GGADP - Northern and Upper Regions: Short Summary of the Evaluation Report, op. cit., p. 7.
30. Ibid.
31. Interview with Chief Administrative Officer for URADEP, Bolgatanga, 9 October 1978.
32. Ibid.
33. A. Abudu and J. Ashcroft, "The Story of URADEP", The Ghana Farmer, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, October 1978, p. 33.
34. So far NORRIP is the largest agricultural development project to be launched in the Northern Region. It started in 1979 and was sponsored jointly by the Canadian Government which was represented by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Government of Ghana. The stated object of this project was to "effect the socio-economic structural changes required to raise the standard of living of the rural poor through the provision and expansion of basic physical infrastructure and social services facilities, and by developing more cost effective agricultural input/output systems".  
Ministry of Economic Planning Files, Tamale, January 1978.
35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.
37. Memorandum from the Acting Principal Economic Planning Officer, Tamale; dated 12 December 1977; M.E.P. Files, Tamale.
38. The widespread system of corruption known in Ghana as "kalabule" will be discussed later in Chapter 5.
39. Interview with J. Effah, Bolgatanga, 9 October 1978.
40. Interview with A. Bawa, Navrongo, 8 October 1978.
41. Informal discussion with T. Atowe, URADEP Field Officer, Bolgatanga, 9 October 1978.
42. Interview with Mr. Gumah, Upper Regional Chief Farmer, Bolgatanga, 15 August 1978.
43. Ibid.
44. Interview with Chief Administrative Officer, URADEP, Bolgatanga, 9 October 1978.
45. NORRIP, as we have seen, was the other major agricultural project to be set up in the Northern Region, but it had just entered its first phase by 1978 and could not therefore be assessed then in terms of its achievement.
46. Interview with Assistant Economic Planning Officer, Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale, 10 August 1979. It should be noted that these were the personal views of the Officer concerned, and not an official interpretation.
47. Ministry of Economic Planning Files, Tamale, 1978.
48. Report of the Agricultural Monitoring Mission to the Northern and Upper Regions, Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, 1977, p. 18.
49. Ibid., p. 12.
50. The Mills were paying  $\text{¢}$  100 per bag while other agents were offering  $\text{¢}$  120. Ibid., p. 12.
51. Ibid., p. 14.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. See for example the following: 1) J.D. Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics", American Political Science Review, 64 (2) 1970; 2) A. Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties", Comparative Studies in Society and History, 10 (3), 1978 and in Schmidt et al, Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, University of California Press, 1977; 3) R. Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation Building", American Political Science Review, 67 (1) 1972, and in S.W. Schmidt et al,

- op. cit.; 4) C. Landé, "Networks and Groups in South East Asia: Some Observations on the Group Theory of Politics" in Schmidt et al, op. cit.
55. R. Lemarchand, op. cit., p. 100.
  56. Scott, "Patron-client Politics and Political Change in South-East Asia" in Schmidt et al, p. 127.
  57. Landé, op. cit., p. xx.
  58. Weingrod, in Schmidt et al, op. cit., p. 324.
  59. Ibid.
  60. F.G. Bailey, Politics and Social Change: Orissa in 1959, University of California Press, 1963.
  61. For example, see Lemarchand, op. cit., p. 113, and Weingrod, op. cit., p. 324.
  62. Scott, op. cit., pp. 126-27.
  63. E. Ozbudun, "Turkey: The Politics of Political Clientelism" in S.N. Eisenstadt and R. Lemarchand, eds., Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development, London 1981, p. 251.
  64. Ibid.
  65. Ibid.
  66. Ibid.
  67. For example, see J.D. Powell, op. cit., p. 412, and Scott, op. cit., p. 131.
  68. Ozbudun, op. cit., p. 251.
  69. C. Landé, "Networks and Groups in South East Asia: Some Observations on the Group Theory of Politics" in Schmidt et al, op. cit., p. 77.
  70. R. Lemarchand in Schmidt et al, op. cit., p. 104.
  71. For an excellent discussion of this type of patronage see the following studies: 1) Polly Hill, "Landlords and Brokers: A West African Trading System", Cahiers D'études Africaines 6 (23), 1966; 2) Polly Hill, "Markets in Africa", Journal of Modern African Studies 1 (4), 1964; and for a very illuminating discussion on this subject from a political science point of view see also Abner Cohen, "The Social Organisation of Credit in a West African Cattle Market" in Schmidt et al, op. cit.
  72. R. Lemarchand, op. cit., p. 105.
  73. J. Boissevain, Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulations and Coalitions, Oxford, 1974, pp. 147-48.
  74. Ibid., p. 148.

75. Douglas A. Chalmers, "Parties and Societies in Latin America" in Schmidt et al, op. cit., p. 413.
76. Scott, op. cit., p. 127.
77. Ibid.
78. The concept of Union Government, or Unigov, as it was commonly referred to, is discussed in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SMALL-SCALE RICE FARMING

In this Chapter we will attempt to demonstrate that the incentives provided by the agricultural policies of the Acheampong regime in the form of subsidies on agricultural inputs such as mechanical equipment, fertilizer, improved seeds, and bank credit, did not benefit the small rice farmers. We will also attempt to show the relative failure of people starting off as small farmers without political connections to make a profit out of rice farming.

According to the 1970 agricultural census there were 5,600 rice growers in the Northern Region of Ghana, with an average holding of 6.4 acres.<sup>1</sup> This figure had probably increased to around 6,500 by 1978, of which 25 per cent of the growers were producing at subsistence level, 60 per cent at the small-scale commercial level (under 50 acres), and 15 per cent at the large-scale commercial level (over 50 acres).<sup>2</sup> The differentiation between the various levels of production is really one of gradation, as will be seen in the course of the analysis. It should be noted from the beginning that 'subsistence' or 'non-commercial' farmers did not, as a rule, utilize subsidised inputs, since these were not available to them, or they did not have the resources to purchase them. On the other hand, the small-scale commercial rice farmers utilized most of these inputs, together with some paid labour, though the combination in which these factors were used depended upon their availability or the resources of the individual farmer.

#### Subsistence Farmers and Rice Production

We begin our analysis of small farmers' experiences by classifying these into 'subsistence' and 'small-scale commercial'. The concept of

the Ghanaian 'peasantry' embraces in reality different scales and, to some degree, different modes of production which it is analytically useful to distinguish for the purpose of this thesis.

This discussion of subsistence farmers is based on a series of visits to farms situated in the surrounding villages of Tamale, and on informal interviews with such farmers in the Tamale and Yendi districts. Forty-six such farmers were interviewed altogether. Among the villages visited were Nyankpala, Vitin, Kanville, Jimle, Tampion, Nanton and Kalaraga in the Tamale district, and Sambu, better known as Mion, in the Yendi district. Visits to the villages (with the exception of Sambu) were always accompanied by visits to the farms during which informal discussions were held with the farmers. They often spoke at great length about their farming history and activities, but questions were usually directed at them with a view to clarifying specific issues, such as the use of inputs, type of technology employed, sources of agricultural finance, and markets for their produce.

The average size of a subsistence farmer's holding was very small, about four or five acres, of which about half was put under rice cultivation. There were of course several factors influencing the size of these holdings, but the most common was the lack of initial capital. In other words, they would produce for the market if they could. Farming on a large-scale would inevitably require the investment of capital which was not readily available to these farmers from banks or other financial institutions. The reluctance of banks to give credit to such farmers was based on their belief (which was not totally unfounded) that these farmers could not provide sufficient security to guarantee loan repayment.

The importance of bank credit was recognised by every farmer in the area. Although it was part of official government policy to encourage

financial institutions to assist all farmers, irrespective of size, yet small-holders were the least assisted. On the other hand, banks would always refuse to extend credit to those farmers who seemed intent upon being, or likely to remain, subsistence farmers. Not a single one of the subsistence farmers interviewed claimed to have received any form of financial assistance from any of the commercial banks.

Prior to the importance given to rice farming from about 1972 or so, the subsistence farmers' chief concern was with providing food for their families. The introduction of commercial rice farming, however, changed their outlook. Like every other farmer in the region these wanted to capitalise on the opportunities introduced by the agricultural 'expansion' in the region. As one of them put it, their aim was not to remain "poor" and produce at a "petty" level, while others were "cashing in" on the new opportunities provided by the State. Unfortunately, they had been unable to achieve their ambition because of the various "forces" working against them.<sup>3</sup> The most important farming resource, land, was of course no problem since, according to these farmers, there was always a village chief somewhere who would provide them with enough to meet their needs. Indeed a subsistence farmer from Kalaraga testified to having obtained "more than fifty acres" for purposes of rice farming, and as soon as he could secure a loan from friends or relatives (my emphasis) he would clear that land and cultivate only "sinkafaa and simli" (rice and groundnuts). Like many other colleagues from the village, he had applied several times for a loan from the ADB in Tamale, but was turned down each time.<sup>4</sup>

Why did these small farmers find it difficult to build up initial capital? The answer lies in the fact that they depended entirely upon farming for their income, and the incidence of low farm yields caused by bad weather conditions and the lack of application of crucial farm

inputs such as fertilizer, meant that small farmers in the North could not accumulate sufficient capital to engage in farming on a commercial scale.

While most subsistence farmers would have genuinely liked to expand, a few others expressed a preference for traditional practice. Our investigation showed that 19 per cent of the subsistence farmers in our sample did not wish to expand. Their main reason was the element of risk involved. For example, a Nyankpala farmer who claimed that he had been engaged in farming, including rice cultivation, for nearly thirty years and was contented with his small four acre farm, did not accept that the advantages of commercial rice farming outweighed the risks involved. He rationalised as follows:

Every year I farm enough to feed my family. Whenever the rains are favourable my yield is plenty, and sometimes I share some of my produce among my brothers. Let us say that I wanted to expand my farm. I would need to borrow money from the bank to buy a tractor and implements. And that is looking for trouble, because if the rains were poor and I had a poor yield how would I repay my loans? ... If I wanted more land, for example, I could get it just like that, but I am happy the way things are.<sup>5</sup>

Several others out of a group of eight small farmers interviewed near the Nyankpalana's palace expressed similar views. Baba Salifu, for example, was able to draw from personal experience. He borrowed 500 cedis from a trader in 1976 so as to increase the size of his farm from four to ten acres in order to cultivate some rice. Unfortunately, it was a bad year for the rains and he lost his entire rice crop. It took him two years to repay the loan, and according to him, he no longer wished "to hang my (his) hat above my (his) head".<sup>6</sup> Thus, while some subsistence farmers aspired to engage in commercial rice production but were prevented from doing so because of various economic or financial constraints, others were more perceptive of the risks involved.

For various reasons, therefore, these small farmers were kept not

only on the 'periphery' of commercial rice production, but were also excluded from participating in the agrarian 'drive' of the 1970s. They did not produce for the market in spite of their willingness to do so. Subsidised inputs, such as tractor services and fertilizers, were not utilised by these farmers since they were not available at prices which they could afford. The most important difference between these and the commercial farmers was in the use by the latter of hired labour. The subsistence farmer depended exclusively upon the use of 'free' (family) labour for all farming activities. Even then, the difference between the two 'systems' was again one of gradation, since 'free' labour was utilised at all levels of farming in the North, including the really large-scale farms.

The group of farmers that we have been describing so far, though numerically very large, contributed only marginally to the amount of rice produced in the North. We will proceed to examine in greater detail the class of small commercial rice farmers whose contribution was crucial, or was expected to be, for the success of the government's agricultural programme.

#### Small-Scale Commercial Rice Farmers

For the purpose of this study small-scale commercial farms will be considered to be those which do not exceed fifty acres in size. This limit is of course arbitrary, but generally it was the range within which farmers displayed the usual characteristics of this type of enterprise, including the non-ownership of machinery. Ownership was a very important factor in determining size, but not necessarily the crucial determinant. Membership of the class of large-scale rice farmers depended upon a combination of factors of which the most important was political connections.

We should point out very early on that the small commercial rice farmer did not necessarily devote all his land to rice production, but only a proportion of it. In fact no farmer used his land exclusively for the purpose of rice cultivation. The rice farmers in the North (big and small alike) often cultivated other food crops. While the large commercial farmers cultivated such other crops as maize and guinea corn, the small ones tended to cultivate the traditional food crops, such as yams, millet, and groundnuts. As far as the large commercial rice farmers were concerned, the proportion of their land devoted to other crops besides rice was, naturally, much smaller, generally exceeding no more than about one-tenth of their total land holding. On the other hand, the small commercial rice farmers tended to allocate a greater proportion of their land to food cropping. Thus, although rice was regarded by the farmers as potentially the most profitable of all the crops cultivated locally, the tendency was for the small farmer to increase his total area under all crops whenever he increased the area under rice cultivation.

As far as the farmer was concerned, the policy of crop diversification had two important functions:- first, to maintain a farming tradition, and secondly, to serve as a premium against a possible loss of the major crop: rice. The small farmer, like his big counterpart, was aware that rice cultivation required a higher resource input than the traditional crops, and consequently incurred a relatively higher production cost. He therefore attempted to 'cover' himself by cultivating a balanced cropping system. As one small farmer explained, he did not underestimate the value of rice, but he also knew that rice cultivation involved a certain amount of risk; he therefore allocated half of his twenty-two acre farm to staple food crops, so that he was "guaranteed a return, no matter how small, at the end of the harvest".<sup>7</sup>

This, however, was the opinion of one of the very few small rice farmers who took a 'rational' view of rice farming. The prevailing opinion among these farmers was that rice was potentially a profitable crop and should be cultivated regardless. As we shall later see, there was no sound basis for such an assumption unless, of course, farming inputs could be purchased at subsidised rates, or rice was sold at black market prices rather than at 'controlled' prices.

Rice, however, was of special importance to the farmer. The price paid by the government rice mills increased over the years - from 2 cedis per bag in 1970 to 70 cedis in 1977 - due of course to pressure on the government by growers. Its appeal became even greater after the launching of OFY in 1972 when the government encouraged its production by providing greater subsidies on inputs as well as credit for farmers.

According to our sample survey of small rice farmers in the Northern Region, most of these took up rice farming on a commercial scale during the late 1960s or the early 1970s during the OFY propaganda campaign. Table 4.1 below shows, for example, that 41 per cent of these farmers took up commercial rice farming between 4 and 6 years prior to 1978, while another 26 per cent started to cultivate it between 7 and 10 years prior to that date. On the other hand, very few farmers took to rice farming in the last three years prior to 1978. This was the period, of course, when subsidised inputs were most difficult to obtain, and which served as a deterrent to prospective farmers.

We have observed that the farmers tried to strike a balance between traditional food crops and rice. Generally, the small farmers allocated about half of their total holding to rice production. Out of a total of 2,295 acres cultivated by the small farmers in our sample survey, 1,134 acres (49.4 per cent) came under rice cultivation. As far as the distribution of farm size was concerned, 42 per cent of the small-scale farms were between 6 and 10 acres, 21 per cent between 11 and 15 acres, and 15 per cent between 16 and 20 acres (Table 4.2).

TABLE 4.1: Small-Scale Commercial Rice Farmers: Experience in Commercial Rice Production Prior to 1978 (a)

<u>Years Prior to 1978</u>	<u>No. of Farmers</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1 - 3	6	7.9
4 - 6	31	40.8
7 - 10	20	26.3
10 - 15	10	13.2
Over 15	9	11.8
	—	—
Total Sample	76	100.0
	—	—

(a) Based on the question "When did you first start cultivating rice to sell?"

Source: Survey of Small-Scale Commercial Rice Farmers, N/R 1978.

TABLE 4.2: Small-Scale Rice Farmers: Distribution of Farms (By Acreage)

<u>Size in Acres</u>	<u>No. of Farms</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
3 - 5	5	6.6
6 - 10	32	42.1
11 - 15	16	21.1
16 - 20	12	15.8
21 - 30	3	3.9
31 - 50	8	10.5
	—	—
	76	100.0
	—	—

Source: Survey of Small-Scale Rice Farmers, N/R, 1978.

Only a very small number of small rice farmers were engaged in cultivating larger acreages. According to our survey, only 3.9 per cent of these farms were between 21 and 30 acres, while 10.5 per cent were within the 31 - 50 acre range. This was a reflection of the operational problems which small farmers experienced in cultivating bigger plots, but also an indication of the difficulties of moving from small-scale to large-scale production. This point alludes to a very interesting question. Were the big farmers those who started off with the right connections, or was it possible to become a big farmer through effort and/or luck, and then gain the right connections? Very few of the big rice farmers started small, i.e. with farms of under fifty acres in size. Research among these farmers suggested that small farmers remained small, due to constraints regarding inputs, especially capital. Most big rice farmers on the other hand started farming with very large acreages, usually between two and three hundred acres, and expanded even further. Such enterprises were possible because of these farmers' already established connections either locally or nationally, or both.

As we have already seen (Chapter 3), within a few years rice had become the single most important cash crop in the North in terms of its rate of expansion. Unfortunately, rice farming did not fulfil the farmers' expectations of making them rich. What it did in fact was to create an illusion of future prosperity among these farmers, with the exception, of course, of the rich and well-connected.

We set out below an estimated budget for a 10 acre rice farm, which represents the average size for a small-scale farming enterprise. This estimate is based upon data collected from our survey of small rice farmers in the Northern Region in 1978, and on prevailing 'market' prices for farm inputs.

TABLE 4.3 : Estimated Budget for a Ten-acre Rice Farm, using Combined Mechanical Equipment and Manual Labour (1978)

Operation	Non-Labour Cost (₹)			Labour Cost <sup>1</sup> (₹)			
	Price	Unit	Total Units	Rate Per Acre	Price/ Hour	Total Units	Total Cost
1. Land clearing <sup>2</sup>			90.00				150.00
2. Pre-Harvest							
(a) Ploughing	80	Acre	10				800.00
(b) Harrowing	40	Acre	10				400.00
(c) Seed	120	Bag	5	4 man hr.	1.00	40	40.00
(d) Fertiliser: NPK	15	Bag	20	2 man hr.	1.00	20	20.00
(e) Fertiliser: sulphate of ammonia	13	Bag	5	1 man hr.	1.00	10	10.00
(f) Weeding				8 man hr.	1.00	80	80.00
3. Harvesting							
Combine Harvester (50%)	90	Acre	5				450.00
Manual (50%)				100 man hr.	1.00	500	500.00

TOTAL COST ₹2,705 ₹800.00

Summary of Revenue and Costs

Revenue

	¢
(a) Total Production (@ 6 bags per acre) = 60 bags	
(b) Total Value @ ¢ 70 per bag	4,200

Costs

	¢
(a) Total Non-Labour Costs	2,705
(b) Total Labour Costs	800
(c) Transport and other Incidentals	350
(d) Total Costs	3,855
Net Profit	345

Notes

- (1) Calculated on the basis of ¢ 5 per 5 hour day.
- (2) Based on the combination of both labour and mechanical equipment, and spread over a period of five years. These figures represent the average yearly cost.
- (3) Manual harvesting is labour-intensive and consists of cutting, heaping, threshing, winnowing and bagging.

The above estimate suggests that small scale rice production was not a very profitable enterprise if 'costs' were based on prevailing market rates. The small producer's net income for a season's work (approximately 6 months) was  $\text{₹ } 345$ , or 57.5 cedis per month, that is, nearly three times lower than the average earnings of a labourer employed, for example, by the Ministry of Agriculture. In other words, small-scale commercial rice farming based on prevailing 'market' prices and the low government (official) prices paid to producers, was not a profitable economic activity vis-à-vis even the lowest paid work in the region. It could have been profitable with government subsidies and/or with prices which would certainly need to have been higher than the prevailing official prices. For example, in our estimate above, if the small farmer had been able to obtain some in-puts such as fertilizer and mechanical tractor services at government subsidised rates, he would have saved at least  $\text{₹ } 715$  in costs alone! Moreover, if the estimated output for the above farm was sold to local traders at  $\text{₹ } 210$  a bag (which reflected a truer market price than the 'official' government price), the farmer would realise total sales of  $\text{₹ } 12,600$ , or a net income of  $\text{₹ } 8,745$  (less costs). The fact remained, however, that the great majority of small rice farmers did not use inputs at subsidised prices, whilst at the same time they were compelled to sell their produce to the Government Rice Mills at 'official' prices, as we shall see.

Overall profitability was also affected by high labour costs. The average labour utilisation per acre in all field activities was about 140 man hours for a small farm, of which about 80 per cent was used for harvesting and 20 per cent for pre-harvesting activities. According to our survey<sup>8</sup>, between 70 and 80 per cent of all labour used was hired labour. The average cost of hired labour was 5 cedis per day<sup>9</sup>, and if the labourers were conveyed (generally by trailer or truck) the cost

to the farmer could be as high as 8 cedis per day per labourer on average. This of course is not the complete picture: some activities such as harvesting utilise more labour than others. If we assume that the farmer utilised 112 man hours (paid) to harvest one acre at 1978 prices, the cost to him would be  $\text{¢} 145.60$  (including transport costs). On the other hand, the cost of hiring a combine harvester was  $\text{¢} 60$  per acre (subsidised rate), or a net saving of  $\text{¢} 85.60$  per acre. It would therefore cost the farmer substantially less to harvest by combine harvester. The point, however, is that combine harvesters were not available to these farmers either because of the general shortage of such machinery, or because of their lack of important 'connections'.

As we indicated earlier in this analysis, it was possible for small-scale rice farmers to make a fairly reasonable profit if inputs were purchased at subsidised prices and/or if their rice was sold at 'market' prices. A few of these farmers did manage to sell some of their produce at such prices. Hoarding (unlike smuggling which was conducted only by the big farmers with important contacts) was not confined to big farmers; some small farmers engaged in it because this was their only realistic means of making a 'reasonable' profit under the circumstances. While hoarding encouraged higher prices and enhanced these farmers' incomes, it did not of course make them 'rich', for, despite their 'inflated' income, production costs were very high. Since these did not own mechanical farming equipment they had to depend upon the big farmers mainly for such services, and for which they paid very high prices. It was the big farmers, therefore, who gained from the 'kalabule' trade in rice.

The number of small rice farmers engaged in hoarding was in fact very small (about 5 per cent altogether). Hoarding (and thus

profiteering) was not a 'safe' activity, especially for small rice farmers who were operating under the illiberal political atmosphere existing in Ghana at that time and which saw the ruthless pursuit of offenders. Thus it was a risk not worth taking except by the most enterprising.

#### Small Rice Farmers and the Sale of Paddy to the Rice Mills

In order to make farmers comply with government policy of selling paddy to the official Rice Mills, specially 'trained' groups of soldiers and police were deployed throughout the countryside and in farmers' homes to search for hoarded crops. During a visit to Damongo in June 1978, the author witnessed an anti-hoarding operation in that area which involved the confiscation of about two thousand bags of rice mainly from small farmers. During June and July 1978 there were reports of similar raids throughout the region, and two of the most affected districts, Yendi and Savelugu, were said to have 'lost' several thousand bags of rice during the 'exercise'.<sup>10</sup> According to the military officer in charge of operations in the Northern Region at the time, and who was himself a large-scale rice farmer, these measures were necessary in order to avoid food shortages in the region and to stop farmers making 'exorbitant profits' from subsidised agriculture.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, according to some of the victims, these raids were meant to intimidate the smaller farmers who were not represented by any organisation in the region, and more especially those who were opposed to the regime. As expressed by one of these farmers:

These people (the soldiers) did not disturb the big men (the big rice farmers) in the town; they picked on all the small farmers ... mainly those who did not support Acheampong. Rather than seizing their rice the officers were helping the big farmers to smuggle it across the borders. I witnessed myself how two trucks carrying rice from Yendi were given permission by Border Guards to cross at the border near Chereponi. They were going to Togo.<sup>12</sup>

As we shall later demonstrate, the very big and well-connected farmers did not have the need to hoard rice in anticipation of high prices during the lean season. They smuggled most of it immediately after harvesting. Thus the anti-hoarding operations in the North during June and July 1978 were directed mainly at those smaller rice farmers who took advantage of the high 'market' prices. Occasionally lorries carrying rice belonging to the big farmers might be intercepted near border points by 'enthusiastic' rank and file soldiers, but as a rule such activities on the part of the big farmers went unchecked.

It is conceivable that the brutal physical punishment handed out to offenders (in addition of course to the confiscation of their produce) did have some effect in increasing official sales. About 70 per cent of the small farmers in our sample survey claimed to have sold all their rice to the Government Rice Mills in 1977/78. Although no official statistics were produced to show the number of small farmers selling officially during 1978/79, officials expressed the opinion that there was "a substantial increase in the number of small farmers who sold their produce to the Mills".<sup>13</sup> While the number of farmers selling to the government might have increased, it still remained difficult to ascertain how much of their produce was actually sold to the Mills, since there was no means of knowing this other than from the farmers themselves.

There was another important reason why small farmers were persuaded to sell to the government at official prices: to enable them to purchase fertilizer at subsidised rates. Purchases from the Depot were conditional upon selling paddy to the Rice Mills, and farmers were required to show proof of this before buying. This had been a policy of the government for several years, but was rarely enforced. During th 1978 and 1979 seasons, however, it was strictly implemented,

especially as fertilizer was in such great demand. Only a few farmers were in fact able to obtain their full fertilizer requirements from the Depot. Others were forced to buy at 'market' prices from those big farmers with surplus quantities. Nevertheless, the majority of the small farmers sold their rice (or rather some of it) to the government in the hope that the distribution and allocation of fertilizer would improve.

Thus the anti-hoarding campaign, combined with the (official) requirement to sell paddy to the Rice Mills as a precondition for purchasing subsidised fertilizer, had some effect at least in increasing sales by the small rice producers. The point, however, is this: how significant was an increase in the level of 'official' sales by small rice farmers to official government purchases? Since between 80 and 90 per cent of the rice produced in the Northern Region was by the large farmers, it follows, therefore, that if purchases were to increase to any significant level these, rather than the small-scale producers, would have had to boost their level of sales to the Government Rice Mills. But as we have already suggested, and will hope later to demonstrate, the big rice farmers smuggled most of their rice or sold it privately at 'market' prices.

#### Small Farmers, Input Utilisation and Rice Production

We have already suggested that small rice farmers experienced exceedingly great difficulties in obtaining subsidised inputs as a result of which they could not hope to meaningfully engage in their farming enterprise. We will now attempt to relate these farmers' experiences with regard to the use of various inputs.

##### (a) Initial Capital

Although it was part of the government's policy to encourage banks

to assist farmers - the ADB was established in 1968 specifically with this objective in view - small rice farmers were the least assisted relative to large rice farmers. Only 19.1 per cent of the small rice farmers in our sample survey received loans or credit from the Banks in Tamale in 1977/78<sup>14</sup> (Table 4.4). Most of those who did not receive financial assistance (56.7 per cent) claimed to have applied but had their applications turned down, while 43.3 per cent had never applied. It is worth noting that 62.6 per cent of all the farmers who did not receive loans were thinking of applying at some future date - an indication of course of the importance of initial capital to these small rice farmers.

TABLE 4.4: Loan/Credit Distribution Among Small-Scale Rice Farmers During 1977/78

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Those Receiving	9	19.1
Those Not Receiving	38	80.9
	—	—
Total Sample	<u>47</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Source: Survey of Small Scale Rice Farmers N/R, 1978.

The reluctance of the commercial banks to grant credit to small rice farmers stemmed from a genuine concern about the ability of these farmers to utilize those facilities profitably as well as to repay their loans. Discussions with ADB officials in Tamale suggested that the Bank would more likely (and in fact did) support small producers of traditional food crops (yams, maize, millet, guinea corn) rather than small rice farmers. In the view of the Loans Officers, the small rice

farmers represented a high element of risk. According to one such official, the small rice farmer lacked the technical expertise to "yield maximum benefit from his farming activities and to make it profitable", so that he was likely to depend more and more upon the Bank for assistance, "until eventually he would be driven into financial ruins and unable to pay back his loans".<sup>15</sup> Before credit was considered, therefore, the Bank had to be satisfied first, of the farmer's ability to put his land to 'good' use, and secondly, of his ability to make repayment in the event of crop failure.<sup>16</sup> The problem of course was what constituted "maximum benefit" and "profitability". According to these officials, a farmer was expected to demonstrate his ability to make a profit from his enterprise (based presumably on his farm income) before he could be considered as being 'safe' for a loan.<sup>17</sup> As we suggested earlier (Table 4.3), profitability depended upon the 'right' combination of factors as well as prevailing prices. The use of loans per se was not a guarantee for profit, but their use would most certainly have allowed small producers scope to combine various factors in such a way as to enhance profitability. A more liberal policy of bank credit together with a true market price for their paddy would have enabled small rice farmers to make a profit and repay their loans. These farmers were therefore 'trapped' because of the misconceptions of bank officials and the unrealistic policy of the government as regards sales and prices. Besides, small farmers did not have the all-important 'connections' that were so crucial to successful farming in the North. Bates has suggested how such 'connections' played an important role in structuring the allocation of loans to the commercial food crop producers in Northern Ghana, with applicants "going over the heads of the professionally-minded lower staff" who would in turn be directed to release the funds to specified individuals.<sup>18</sup> The small-

scale rice producers did not have access to these high-level officials. Our interviews with the small-scale rice farmers in the Northern Region suggested that very few of the unsuccessful applicants were given an audience with bank managers or senior officials and, even if granted, the outcome was still unfavourable to these farmers, as demonstrated by the example of Alhassan Yakubu. After Yakubu's original application to the ADB had been turned down on the grounds that he was not a "serious" farmer, he turned up at the Bank's office in Tamale with receipts showing purchases of "nearly 800 cedis" of inputs, and insisted upon seeing the Manager. After some initial resistance he met a senior Loans Officer who still maintained that he had not "proved" himself to be an efficient rice farmer - it was his second year as a commercial rice producer having produced 75 bags from 20 acres in his first season - and that he should try the following year. When Yakubu produced his documents to prove that he was indeed a "serious" farmer, the official promptly "dismissed" him with a warning that in future he should not be "disturbed".<sup>19</sup>

The attitude of the Banks towards the small farmers was further emphasised by the nature of the loans given to these farmers. Out of the nine farmers in our survey who were in receipt of loans from the ADB, only two were given limited credit with the backing of guarantors for the specific purpose of rice farming.<sup>20</sup>

#### (b) Mechanised Farm Services

The reluctance of banks to provide small rice farmers with financial assistance meant that they were seriously handicapped as far as obtaining the use of mechanical tractor services were concerned. They were not only unable to purchase machinery - it is doubtful whether the purchase of farm machinery by individual small farmers would have paid off anyway, in view of the overall low level of productivity of these farmers

and the unrealistic official prices paid - but to a very large extent their flexibility was restricted since they could not choose between alternative sources of mechanised services. Support by the banks would have meant that farmers could pay for such services by direct credit. The farming agencies did not accept payment by 'instalments' which was a common method of payment among farmers who were not in receipt of bank credit. On the other hand, private owners tended to accept such arrangements especially if the farmer concerned shared a common political (chieftaincy) identification.

Table 4.5 supports the assertion that most of the small rice farmers obtained tractor services from private owners. Some of these services were in fact provided by tractor operators who grabbed an opportunity to earn extra income by ploughing land for small farmers at prices much higher than subsidised rates. While in 1978 the subsidised rate for ploughing and harrowing was ₦ 70 an acre, small farmers paid between ₦ 120 and ₦ 140 to private owners or their operators. The co-operation of tractor operators was indeed crucial for supplying scarce tractor services to the small rice farmers, but it is doubtful whether they constituted a kind of rural "aristocracy" as postulated by Shepherd.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Ministry of Agriculture was a useful source of tractor services it did not supply these on the scale originally expected. One reason for this was due partly to its depleted stock caused by frequent breakdown and lack of spare parts, and partly to the Ministry's preference for allocating machinery to its senior staff, civil servants and other public officials, but more especially military personnel who regarded themselves as having exclusive right to such machinery belonging to the Ministry.<sup>22</sup>

As far as other available sources were concerned, small farmers did not have any success in utilising services provided by these. DEMCO, the biggest of the private agencies, supplied tractor services mainly

TABLE 4.5: Source of Mechanised Services by Small Rice Farmers During 1977

<u>Source</u>	<u>Tractor</u>	<u>Combine Harvester</u>
Private Owners	59	6
Ministry of Agriculture	10	2
DEMCO	2	1
NRDC	0	0
Nasia Rice Company	1	0
Banks	1	1
Self Owner	1	0
Total Utilising Services	74	10
Non-Users	<u>2</u>	<u>66</u>
Total Sample	76	76

Source: Survey of Small-Scale Rice Farmers, N/R, 1978.

to big farmers who were assisted with bank credit, while the others were exclusive to those farmers with 'connections'. Combine harvesters were even more difficult to obtain, with private owners providing the main services to small farmers. Most of these farmers, however, were forced to adopt manual methods of harvesting. Our Table shows that only 13 per cent of the small farmers in our sample utilised combine harvesters, with private owners again providing the main source of supply.

(c) Fertilizer Use by Small Rice Farmers

The application of chemical fertilizers by Northern farmers increased, as we have already noted, with the establishment of the Fertilizer Project by the GGADP in 1970. The introduction of commercial rice farming witnessed an unprecedented increase in the demand

for such fertilizers by local farmers. Chemical fertilizers were important to these rice farmers since no other form of manure was used (or available for use) on land whose organic properties were being rapidly destroyed through inadequate preparation and poor farming techniques generally.

Between 1970 and 1975, when fertilizers were distributed in the North by the GGADP, small farmers did not experience serious difficulties in obtaining their supplies. From 1975/76 however, after its management and distribution was taken over by the Ghanaian government, supplies fell increasingly short of demand mainly because of the government's insolvency. The government was unable to import sufficient quantities and this had severe repercussions on both the allocation and the system of distribution. Great difficulties were experienced in carrying fertilizer from Tema to the regional depots because of the shortage of transport facilities.<sup>23</sup> Even after supplies had actually reached the Tamale Depot, further difficulties were encountered by the lack of storage and packing facilities there. As a report in the Weekly Spectator pointed out, 80,000 bags of fertilizer were left to rot at the Tamale Fertilizer Depot because the Ministry in Accra had failed to respond to a local request for a fresh supply of bags to re-pack the damaged ones.<sup>24</sup>

The total effect of this attitude towards farming was to create a shortage of this important input and to raise its price beyond the means of most small farmers. During the 1978 and 1979 seasons, farmers were particularly hard hit by the fertilizer shortage. Part of the problem in 1978 was the 'timing' of its distribution; by the time it became available at the Depot most farmers had long finished planting, thus making it too late to apply nitrogen, or first 'dressing' as it is commonly known. In the following year it was simply not

available from official agencies and farmers were forced to resort to private sources, i.e. the black market traders, for their supplies.

Less than half (42.1 per cent) the small farmers in our survey claimed to have obtained their fertilizer requirements directly from the Depot in 1978, while 48.7 per cent obtained theirs from private sources which consisted of large farmers or traders (Table 4.6) At the same time only 22.4 per cent of all small farmers in the survey claimed to have obtained an adequate supply of fertilizer during the 1978 season. Most of those who received their stock from the Ministry of Agriculture claimed that their allocation was not sufficient for their needs, and many of these had to make up the deficiency by buying on the black market. During the 1978 farming season N.P.K. was sold between ₦ 12 and ₦ 16 a bag on the 'market', and sulphate of ammonia between ₦ 10 and ₦ 14, while subsidised prices stood at ₦ 7.50 and ₦ 5.50 respectively for the same period. A small minority of the farmers in our sample (9.2 per cent) did not use fertilizer during the 1978 season. The most common reasons given were the high prices charged by 'traders' or the enormous bribes demanded by senior officials at the Depot before fertilizers were released.<sup>25</sup>

There were a few farmers, however, who did not have the need to apply fertilizers because of the fertility of their land. For example, Amadu Abudulai, who for four years prior to 1978 had a twenty acre farm near Daboya, had never applied any form of fertilizer and, according to his testimony, his output was generally as good as, and in some years even better than, those who used fertilizer.<sup>26</sup>

Abudulai's experience was an exception since his farm was situated along a tributary of the White Volta where the land was extremely fertile. The use of fertilizer was crucial for successful rice cultivation in the North.

TABLE 4.6: Fertilizer Use by Small-Scale Rice Farmers During 1977-1978

<u>Source</u>	<u>Sufficient</u>		<u>Insufficient</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Ministry of Agriculture	11	14.5	21	27.6	32	42.1
Private	6	7.9	31	40.8	37	48.7
None	-		-		7	9.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>68.4</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: By 'sufficient' is meant the amount officially recommended for use by the farmer. Thus, the recommended application rate for N.P.K. is between two and three bags per acre, while for sulphate of ammonia the rate is one bag per acre.

Source: Survey of Small-Scale Commercial Rice Farmers, N/R, 1978.

#### (d) Recruitment of Labour

Competition for casual labour was very energetic and enterprising between all types of farmers. While the small rice farmers utilised a greater proportion of hired labour for harvesting relative to other operations, the large farmers used most of it during the weeding process. Casual labour on the whole was not in short supply, but there were those labourers who were considered as 'specialists' either through efficiency or experience, and who were in greater demand as a result. It was mainly from among the rest, or 'fringe' supply, that the smaller farmers recruited their workforce.

The better skilled labourers were also 'creamed off' by the higher wages paid by the more prosperous large-scale farmers. During the 1978 season some of these farmers paid between  $\text{₱} 5$  and  $\text{₱} 6$  a day for

the 'specialist' labourers recruited from the urban centres, while the less skilled ones were paid  $\text{C} 3$  a day on average. Casual labour recruited from the rural areas, i.e. from villages situated around the farms, received much less in compensation. During the 1978 weeding season, village recruits from near Gushiegu were paid between  $\text{C} 2$  and  $\text{C} 3$  a day, according to their skill, by farmers from Tamale. Such pay differential led at times to conflict between labour and capital, and which in some cases gave an impression of the manifestation of class conflict such as in 1977 when a group of 60 casual workers recruited from local villages downed their tools and threatened to "chop down" Alhaji Abdul-Rahamani's farm in Daboya, if they were not given an increase in pay from  $\text{C} 3$  to  $\text{C} 4$  a day.<sup>27</sup>

The existence of a dual system of pay structure for casual labour posed very serious problems to the small rice farmer. The fact that they were left with a 'residue' of labour did not necessarily mean that small farmers paid 'cheap' rates for such services. These were not 'surplus' labour in the true sense, i.e. as far as the market was concerned. They were 'surplus' relative only to the needs of the big farmers. But as far as their bargaining power with the small farmers was concerned, these casual labourers negotiated over wages or conditions of work, and generally won some concessions. Usually the farmer would agree to provide meals comparable to those offered by the big farmers to their workers. Furthermore, small farmers did not have their own means of transport, and labourers recruited from the urban centres had to be conveyed at extra costs. Thus the small rice farmers did not only compete against the large-scale rice farmers for labour, but also the average 'cost' of labour to them was probably much higher than to their big counterparts.

Some small farmers could minimise or avoid altogether the high cost

of transporting workers to farms by recruiting, whenever possible, from nearby villages. According to our survey, nearly 58 per cent of the small rice farmers recruited labour in this way (Table 4.7). Besides saving on transport, they also paid cheaper rates to village recruits.<sup>28</sup> Of course it was not always possible for the farmer to recruit only from the villages; he simply had to supplement his workforce by recruiting from the urban centres. Thus according to our survey, 14.5 per cent of the small farmers recruited casual labourers from Tamale only, while 27.6 per cent recruited both from Tamale and the villages. Those farmers who recruited casual labour only from Tamale either had a 'regular' and reliable supply from there, or did not have the necessary 'contacts' to recruit 'cheap' labour from the villages near their farms.

TABLE 4.7: Source of Recruitment of Casual Labour by Small-Scale Rice Farmers (1977)

<u>Source</u>	<u>No. of Farmers</u>	<u>% of Sample</u>
Tamale only	11	14.5
Surrounding villages only (a)	44	57.9
Both	21	27.6
Total sample	<u>76</u>	<u>100.0</u>

(a) Villages situated near the farm.

Source: Survey of Small-Scale Rice Farmers, N/R, 1978.

Nearly all small rice farmers in the North utilised hired labour. It should be noted that small farmers did not make exclusive use of either type of labour, but used degrees of each. Generally, the amount

of hired labour employed by the small farmer varied between 70 and 80 per cent of his total workforce. The final proportion of hired to 'free' labour depended upon various factors: the size of holdings, capital, the type of farm activity (weeding or harvesting), the amount of 'free' labour available to the farmer and, of course, the cost of hired labour.

#### Output Level and Motivation Among Small Rice Farmers

How did the problems experienced by the small rice farmers, in the light of the above analysis, affect their overall performance in terms of general output? Let us examine briefly the level of output of these farmers.

TABLE 4.8: Crop Yield for Small-Scale Rice Farmers (1977)

<u>Crop</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Total Yield (Bags)</u>	<u>Average Yield per Acre</u>
Rice	581	1,235	2.1
Millet	307	348	1.1
Maize	412	542	1.3
Groundnuts	259	873	3.4
Guinea Corn	56	64	1.1

- Notes: (1) The Table includes commercial crops, i.e. crops that are cultivated mainly for the market. Yams were widely grown by rice farmers but were used mainly for domestic consumption.
- (2) In the sample of 76 small rice farmers, 61.4 per cent cultivated millet, 70 per cent maize, 41 per cent yams, 56.8 per cent groundnuts, and 12.9 per cent guinea corn.
- (3) Intercropping was still a common practice among the farmers of Northern Ghana and was adopted by 50% of the farmers in our sample. However, only 5.3 per cent intercropped rice.

Source: Survey of Small-Scale Rice Farmers, N/R, 1978.

One of the most important results indicated by the above Table (4.8) is the extremely poor yield realised by these farmers, not only for rice, but for all crops. Millet, maize, and guinea corn yielded just over one bag per acre on average, while groundnuts yielded slightly over three bags (unshelled). The average yield for rice was 2.1 bags of paddy per acre. As far as rice was concerned, the Ministry of Agriculture estimated that the expected yield was between fifteen and twenty bags per acre, so that on average productivity was drastically low. The productivity for all other crops was several times below the 'officially' expected yield. For example, millet was expected to yield between 9 and 10 bags per acre, while maize, groundnuts, and corn were expected to yield about 15, 10 and 12 bags respectively on average.<sup>29</sup> But as we have already seen, the farmers in the North were constrained by a number of factors which contributed to the overall low level of productivity. Included among these constraints were the shortage of mechanised farm services, fertilizers, and a general lack of capital. Furthermore, there were the familiar weather hazards such as drought or erratic rainfall which could seriously affect output. The 1979 farming season, for instance, was seriously disrupted by floods caused by the heavy and persistent rains that fell during the early months and which caused only a relatively small proportion of agricultural land in the North to be cultivated. Officials at the Ministry of Agriculture in Tamale estimated that less than one-tenth of the total acreage of land under rice production in the Northern Region was actually cultivated during that year.<sup>30</sup> Similar views were expressed by the Chief Farmer for the Upper Region who claimed that the unforeseen early rains had caused so much flooding to paddy fields that farmers in the region would not be able to grow any rice whatsoever.<sup>31</sup> Production may have been especially low in 1979 because of bad weather

conditions, but the generally low level of production by comparison with the expected yield was due, on the whole, to the lack of application of farm inputs.

For the small-scale grower who did not own or have access to inputs the problems were both serious and varied. Yet the farmers persevered, and during the period under consideration the acreage under rice farming in the North increased at an impressive rate. While the overall size of small farms might not have increased significantly, the number of small farmers who were engaged in rice production increased sharply between 1970 and 1976. We are therefore forced to ask the question: What motivated the farmers to pursue such an apparently risky and non-profitable enterprise?<sup>32</sup> There is no one single answer to this question, but, paradoxically, the most common reason given by the farmers themselves was the profit motive.

Table 4.9 refers to the stated motives of small rice farmers for pursuing this enterprise.

TABLE 4.9: Small Farmers' Main Motives for Cultivating Rice

<u>Stated Motives</u>	<u>No. of Farmers</u>	<u>%</u>
Financial Gain	68	89.4
Interest in Rice Cultivation	35	46.0
Tradition from Family	22	28.9
Introduction of Tractor	41	53.9
Other Farmers' Success	8	10.5
Supplement Income	28	36.8
Government Policy	19	25.0
Total No. in Sample	76	

Source: Survey of Small-Scale Rice Farmers, N/R, 1978.

According to Table 4.9, the great majority of small rice farmers in our survey took to rice farming because of the potential profit involved. More than 89 per cent of these farmers claimed that they were motivated by this reason, while 25 per cent stated that they were attracted to rice farming because of government policy as regards rice farmers, i.e. the supply of various inputs at subsidised rates to farmers. It is interesting that more than 53 per cent of these farmers were motivated by the introduction of the tractor whose services they obtained only with the greatest difficulty. A few, however (10.5 per cent), claimed that they were 'encouraged' by the success of other rice farmers.

The prevailing opinion among the small farmers that rice production was a profitable enterprise is not supported by the evidence. It was profitable only to the big and well-connected farmers who, as we have noted, either sold their rice at 'market' prices or smuggled it to neighbouring countries. The small producers, on the other hand, were obliged to sell at 'official' prices to the government. In order to realise a profit at prevailing 'official' prices the small farmer would have had to obtain all inputs at 'subsidised' rates, as well as improve drastically on his level of output. Neither of these conditions existed.

The claim by some of the farmers that they were motivated by government policy towards rice farmers has to be examined closely. Officially, it was the policy of the government to assist all farmers, including small rice producers, by providing them with inputs and encouraging banks to provide loans wherever possible for farming in the region. But it was the big farmers who benefitted mostly from these policies. From time to time the small farmers were promised assistance via various regional establishments, but these never materialised. Having been 'trapped' in this situation, they continued to pursue their farming activities under great difficulty, hoping that conditions would

later improve. They were also 'encouraged' by the over-optimistic view that one good harvest in the future could make up for previous losses.

We will illustrate this attitude on the part of small farmers with the example of Issa Mohammed who started to cultivate rice in 1975 on a ten acre farm near Savelugu.<sup>33</sup> In three consecutive harvests he produced eleven, twenty-eight, and twenty-four bags of paddy respectively. His main problems were the usual ones associated with rice farming in the North: shortage of farm inputs and machinery, lack of initial capital and poor rainfall, which, in varying degrees, were responsible for his poor yields. In 1977, Mohammed sold 16 bags of rice - 10 to the Government Rice Mills at ¢ 70 each, and 6 to market women at ¢ 190 each - bringing him a total revenue of ¢ 1,840. He claimed that he spent ¢ 90 an acre for ploughing, and a further ¢ 200 on fertilizer (obtained mainly from private sources). His labour costs were estimated at ¢ 500, while other expenditure (bags, transport, bribes, etc.) amounted to about ¢ 100. Total expenditure was estimated at ¢ 1,700, thus leaving him with a net profit of only ¢ 140. Mohammed was not discouraged by such a low profit margin. On the contrary, he expressed a desire to increase his acreage in subsequent years if he could obtain tractor services "in reasonable time and for a reasonable price".<sup>34</sup> Mohammed justified his enterprise in this way:

If I am lucky with the weather, even on my ten acres, I could harvest not only thirty or forty bags of rice, but more than one hundred ... and I would be able to make up for all my losses over the past year and maybe the year before. With rice farming here in the North you cannot predict your output ... so you have to keep trying.<sup>35</sup>

The opinion that their luck would change sooner or later was prevalent among the small rice farmers. The point is, however, how long could such optimism last?

A programme which was intended officially to boost agricultural production mainly through small-farmer participation, succeeded therefore

in excluding these same farmers by systematically denying them necessary inputs in favour of a new rural class of large-scale rice farmers whose members depended upon political or other 'connections' and the patronage of local chieftaincy for their predominantly successful rice farming enterprise. We will proceed in the next chapter to examine the experiences of these large-scale rice farmers.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4.

1. Ghana Census of Agriculture, 1970.
2. Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale, 1978.
3. Interview with Alhassan Nagumsi, Kalaraga, Tamale, 31 May 1978.
4. Interview with Osuman Alhassan, Kalaraga, Tamale, 31 May 1978.
5. Interview with Zakaria Abudulai, Nyankpala, 3 June 1978.
6. Interview with Baba Salifu, Nyankpala, 3 June 1978.
7. Interview with Osuman Adam, Tamale, 18 August 1978.
8. Our survey on rice farmers was conducted in two parts during 1978 and consisted of small-scale and large-scale rice farmers.
9. A working day varied between five and six hours, depending upon the distance of the farm from the centre of recruitment.
10. Informal discussion with Major Fosu, who was in charge of anti-hoarding operations in the Northern and Upper Regions during 1978, Bolgatanga, 10 July 1978.
11. Ibid.
12. Interview with Musah Yahaya, Yendi, 14 August 1978.
13. Interview with Rice Mills Manager, Tamale, 9 September 1978.
14. Credit here included the use of a 'chit' system by which the Ministry of Agriculture supplied the farmer with fertilizer or seeds which was paid for by direct credit through the banks. It did not include facilities for the purchase of farm machinery.
15. Interview with Martin Poku, ADB Loans Officer, Tamale, 27 August 1978.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Bates, op. cit., p. 58.
19. Interview with Alhassan Yakubu, Gumbehene, Tamale, 15 September 1978.
20. Abukari Mahamadu received 500 cedis to help with ploughing and weeding his twenty acre rice farm, and was sponsored by a younger brother who was employed at the Regional Administration. The other recipient, Seidu, was given 800 cedis to use on his twenty-five acre rice farm after a local trader had acted as guarantor.
21. Shepherd, op. cit., p. 216.

22. Senior military officers in the region, including Regional Commissioners, frequently demanded the services of tractors and combine harvesters from the Ministry and without paying for them. Due to its subordination to the military, especially during the Acheampong period, the Ministry was in no position to refuse such demands.
23. A senior District Officer at the Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, specified that the serious fertilizer shortage in 1978 was due in the main to the unavailability of transport to carry supplies from Tema. Arrangements by the Ministry of Agriculture to hire private vehicles proved difficult in view of the shortage of fuel and spare parts.  
Interview with K. Kadri, Tamale, 17 August 1978.
24. Weekly Spectator, 6 May 1978.  
This allegation was indeed confirmed by our observation at the Tamale Depot. In June 1978, several hundred bags of fertilizer could be seen 'caked' at the Depot. The workers claimed that these had been left exposed for several months because of the lack of packing facilities there.
25. My interviewee claimed that he was asked for ₵ 100 in bribes by a senior official at the Depot before he could purchase 40 bags of fertilizer. Since he could not afford to pay such enormous bribes, he was forced to buy "just a handful of bags" at very high prices - ₵ 16 a bag for N:P:K and ₵ 12 for sulphate of ammonia.  
Interview with Zakaria Abudulai, Gumbehene, 18 August 1978.
26. Interview with Amadu Abudulai, Tamale, 9 June 1978.
27. Interview with Alhaji Abdul Rahamani, Tamale, 10 July 1978.  
For a detailed analysis of the labour struggle in the rice industry see N. Van Hear, "Northern Labour and the Development of Capitalist Agriculture in Ghana", Ph.D. thesis, Birmingham, 1982.
28. Village recruits from the Northern Region were paid, on average, ₵ 3 per day in 1978.
29. Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, 1978.
30. Interview with Mr. Nutakor, GGADP agronomist, Tamale, 18 July 1978.
31. The situation in the Upper Region was so serious that the farmers there had even considered calling upon the government to explain the possible consequences for the region as far as food supplies were concerned.  
Interview with Mr. Gumah, Upper Regional Chief Farmer, Bolgatanga, 15 August 1978.

32. In our estimated cost analysis at the beginning of the chapter it was argued that rice production, based on low 'official' government prices and high 'market' prices for inputs, was not a profitable enterprise for the small scale producer. We did not attempt to compare the profitability of rice to other crops, for example, millet.
33. This example is taken deliberately from the group of small producers who sold part of their rice to market women or traders at high prices, with a view to demonstrating that under the conditions existing in the North at the time even these farmers could not realistically claim to make a profit from rice cultivation.
34. Interview with Issah Mohammed, Jimle, 22 August 1978.
35. Ibid.

CHAPTER 5THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LARGE-SCALE RICE FARMING

The object of this Chapter is to examine the general characteristics of that group of rice farmers which we described earlier as "large-scale commercial". The Chapter sets out also to examine certain types of relationship created by these farmers in order to promote their economic interests. What is emphasised here, and has not been discussed in adequate detail in the literature generally, is the effect of government sponsorship upon large-scale rice farming in the North, especially in Dagbon, and the way this was responsible for the development of different socio-economic groups or 'classes' in the process. Our main concern in this Chapter, and in subsequent chapters, is about rice farmers in Dagbon (which is the central focus of this thesis), although we will illustrate certain points where necessary by making general references to the North in general.

We have already stated that the government's approach to encouraging rice production was based on a system of input-subsidy. Rather than supplying the necessary inputs (mechanised services, fertilizers, improved seeds, etc.) at their real cost and hoping that the high world market price for rice would induce Northern farmers to produce it, the government attempted to increase its supply to urban markets at an artificially low (official) price but nevertheless to make its production profitable through subsidised inputs.

By 'large-scale' farmers we mean those farmers with a total holding of over fifty acres of land, the point at which they were likely to adopt modern farm technology. According to the commercial banks, it was at this point that they preferred to start considering farmers for loans and other credit facilities. Officials at the Ministry of Agriculture also considered this the minimum size at which farmers could begin to produce

rice on a "significant commercial basis".<sup>1</sup> It also represented an optimal farm size (or at least an adequately profitable farm size relative to very small farms).<sup>2</sup> The extensive use of certain types of inputs such as hired labour or mechanical equipment is not considered to be the main criterion determining large-scale production since, as we have seen, small-scale commercial farmers also made some, if limited use, of such inputs. The important point is that it was from amongst those with holdings of fifty acres or more that farmers started to own farm machinery as well as seeking membership of the RGA, and securing benefits associated with membership of which the ability to gain bank loans might be a part.

#### Large-Scale Rice Farmers, Connections, and Bank Credit

One very important advantage of being a member of the class of large-scale rice farmers was the access which one had to those in positions of influence both at the local and national level, and through which one's rice farming capabilities were greatly enhanced. We should state from the beginning that not all large-scale rice farmers benefitted equally from membership of this class. Some were in a better position relative to others as far as access to 'aid' administrators were concerned. Among those big farmers who were not so well-placed, assistance was obtained from the more privileged and prominent amongst them via patron-client relationships. As we shall see when we consider social mobility in Dagbon, the need to belong to, or support the ruling chieftaincy gate was crucial. The prominent Dagomba rice farmers were generally all members or leading supporters of this gate. Of course there were a considerable number of large-scale rice farmers who were non-Dagombas, and who had no important allegiance to the ruling dynasty. The most successful among these farmers, however, had in common with the ruling gate their unqualified support for the Acheampong regime, and which was instrumental for receiving help for a profitable rice farming enterprise

in the North.

The big rice farmers used their position to obtain generous supplies of all subsidised inputs, especially subsidised credit. Rothchild has pointed to the relative success which large-scale Ghanaian farmers have experienced in securing funds from the banks. According to him, 53.3 per cent of the total funds loaned by the ADB in 1974 were distributed among 3.5 per cent of the applicants who were each authorised to borrow  $\text{C}\text{d}$  20,000 and above.<sup>3</sup> Bates has argued that such loans were generally allocated not according to commercial criteria but rather to patterns of friendship and influence.<sup>4</sup>

The extent to which rice farmers in the Northern Region were supported by the banks has been clearly demonstrated by Shepherd.<sup>5</sup> According to his summary, by 1976 most of the loan recipients were large-scale rice farmers, i.e., those with fifty acres or more (See Table 5.1). These received 85 per cent of the loans given by the banks in Tamale. As far as the really big rice farmers were concerned (those with 200 acres or more), they accounted for 32 per cent of all such loans. Moreover, senior employees (civil servants and other public officials) and senior military and police personnel were given considerable priority over their junior counterparts, not only for those cultivating very big acreages (200 acres or more), but also for all size farms, including small-scale production. This tends to support our claim that status was an important factor determining the allocation of subsidised agricultural inputs to farmers.

By 1978, status and 'connections' had become even more important as a means of receiving credit from banks. At that time, banks had adopted the policy of cutting back drastically on available credit to farmers due to the low level of repayment among these farmers, and concentrated instead upon recovering outstanding loans. They were

TABLE 5.1: Occupation by Acreage of All Bank-Financed Rice Farmers, NR, 1976

<u>Size</u>	<u>Chiefs</u>	<u>Farmers</u>	<u>Business</u>	<u>Employees, etc.</u>		<u>Military &amp; Police</u>		<u>Others</u>	<u>Total</u>
				<u>Senior</u>	<u>Junior</u>	<u>Senior</u>	<u>Junior</u>		
0-49	0	52	18	16	24	12	7	22	151
50-99	14	42	39	34	27	9	10	9	184
100-149	1	24	13	12	9	8	0	17	84
150-199	0	9	7	13	12	9	0	5	55
200-299	4	60	44	17	4	9	1	5	144
300-499	1	16	13	5	1	7	0	5	48
500 +	1	12	9	6	0	0	0	0	28
Total	21	215	143	103	77	54	18	63	694

Source: Adapted from Shepherd, op. cit., p. 88.

accordingly very selective in their choice of customers, especially as regards new rice farmer customers. New farmers were not normally accepted without the 'backing' of those already established, i.e. prominent customers who might be rice farmers. Thus by 1978, personal contacts or 'connections' became an even more important factor in determining a farmer's ability to gain subsidised agricultural inputs.

Loan advances to big rice farmers varied according to size of farm, status, and to an extent the needs of the farmer. The minimum credit given to rice farmers in overdraft by Barclays Bank in 1978, for example, was ₦ 14,000, while some of the very big ones received up to ₦ 60,000. As far as long-term loans for the purchase of farm machinery and equipment were concerned, these amounted in some cases to several hundred thousand cedis outstanding by June 1978.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to 1978, some very big farmers received loans simultaneously from different banks for different purposes. Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, one of the biggest and most successful rice farmers in the North, and a chief supporter of the Acheampong regime, took out several 'huge' loans which were not always utilised for 'agric - business'. After a 'bumper' harvest in 1977 in which he claimed to have sold 12,000 bags of paddy to the Government Rice Mills (and one presumes several thousand more at 'market' prices), he obtained a "very big" loan from Barclays Bank for "other business purposes", i.e. besides rice farming.<sup>7</sup> It was widely believed that this particular loan was used to finance the construction of his office block in the centre of Tamale, a claim which he strongly repudiated during the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council's (AFRC) investigations in 1979. Early in 1977 Alhaji Zakaria was also granted an import licence on the personal recommendation of Acheampong, and this was used to purchase eight tractors and implements.<sup>8</sup> Nearly all members of the RGA executive were in receipt of generous loans from

the banks. The Chairman received a loan from the ADB for farming purposes in 1977, while at the same time securing another big one from Barclays Bank to promote his transport business.<sup>9</sup> The Organising Secretary was another beneficiary, he was granted an import licence early in 1978 for the purpose of buying farm machinery, in addition to several large loans which he had already secured both for himself and his brothers.<sup>10</sup> These were only a few of the several well-connected big farmers who used their influence to obtain funds for various purposes other than rice farming.

By 1978 some of the big rice farmers in the North had been utilising subsidised bank loans for a period of up to five or six years. In many cases payment was deferred under the pretext of 'poor' harvests, while in others loans were not repaid in full as these farmers used their political influence to stop the banks enforcing repayment. Thus the extent to which the large and well-connected farmers benefitted from the structure of loan allocation in the North cannot be underestimated.

We have seen how several big farmers obtained huge loans for the purpose of rice cultivation. But how profitable was rice farming to these farmers? We will examine this question before proceeding to discuss more fully the specific types of relationship which developed between members of this class for the consolidation of their group interests.

#### Profitability of Large-Scale Rice Farming

Several farmers experienced good crop yields from time to time, such as during the 'bumper' crop of 1974, or the 1978/79 harvest when most farmers realised above average yields. In between these years, however, crops were affected by drought and bush fires when some farmers experienced total loss of their crops. Because of the unpredictable

TABLE 5.2: Estimated Budget for a 300-acre Rice Farm using Mechanical Equipment, 1977/78

<u>Farming Activity</u>	<u>Input Rate</u> per Acre	<u>Price Per Unit</u> ₱	<u>Total Unit</u>	<u>Total Cost</u> ₱	<u>Man Hours</u> per Acre	<u>Price</u> per Hour ₱	<u>Total</u> <u>Units</u> (hours)	<u>Total</u> <u>Cost</u> ₱
Land Clearing		90.00 (acre)	300 (acres)	5,400				
				(a)				
Ploughing/ Harrowing		70.00 (acre)	300 (acres)	21,000				
Planting	½ (bag)	120.00 (bag)	150 (bags)	18,000	4	1.00	1,200	1,200
Fertilizer:								
NPK	2 (bags)	7.50 (bag)	600 (bags)	4,500	3	1.00	900	900
Sulphate of Ammonia	½ (bag)	5.50 (bag)	150 (bags)	825	1.5	1.00	450	450
Weeding					8	1.00	2,400	2,400
Harvesting		60 (acres)	300 (acres)	18,000				
Total:				<u>₱67,725</u>				<u>₱4,950</u>

(a) Estimated at ₱ 90 an acre, and spread over a 5 year period. The above figure represents the annual cost.

Summary of Estimated Costs and Revenue

1 Non-Labour	₱ 67,725.00	1 Average Yield: 8 bags per Acre
2 Labour	4,950.00	2 Total Production: 300 x 8 = 2,400 bags
3 Incidentals (Transport, Fuel, Bags, etc.)	5,000.00	3 Price ₱ 70 per bag
Total	<u>77,675.00</u>	4 Total Revenue = <u>₱ 168,000.00</u>
Net Profit	<u>90,325.00</u>	

Assumptions

- 1 Large-scale rice farmers use all farm inputs at official subsidised rates.
- 2 The superior yield for large-scale rice farmers was due to more efficient land preparation, a greater utilisation of subsidised inputs, and a more economical method of harvesting by mechanical equipment.
- 3 Large-scale rice farmers sell their produce to the Government Rice Mills at 'official' prices.

nature of output due to natural or other causes, it becomes problematic to try to estimate the profitability of rice farming in the region. Of course any reliable estimate as to the profitability of rice production must take into account the question of 'time'. What is attempted here is an analysis of its profitability based upon 1978 costs, and an average output for the more successful farmers. This estimate is also based on a 300 acre farm, which could be regarded as a fairly typical large-scale farming enterprise in Dagbon.

Large-scale rice farming (as suggested by the above estimate) was characterised by mechanised techniques for all major operations:

landclearing, ploughing and harvesting. Planting, or seed 'broadcasting' as it is popularly known, fertilizer application and weeding were carried out by manual labour. It should be noted that a few (very few) large farmers did not utilise manual labour for weeding; they practised weed control either by double-harrowing (which was more effective when water was abundant during the early growth of the crop) or by the application of chemical weed killers (herbicides).

As we will see from the above estimate, the average labour input per acre was lower for large-scale rice farms than for small rice farms. Labour utilisation for our (estimated) large farm was 16.5 man hours per acre compared with 65 man hours per acre for small rice farms (Table 4.1, Chapter 4). The main reason for this difference was the greater use of labour made by small farmers for harvesting and land-clearing. As far as the large-scale enterprise was concerned, 48.5 per cent of the total man hours were allocated to weeding, while 24 per cent was used for planting, and 27 per cent for fertilizer application.

The total estimated expenditure for a 300 acre farm enterprise was  $\text{₹ } 77,675$ , of which the biggest items of expenditure were ploughing and harrowing on the one hand, and harvesting on the other; they accounted for 31 per cent each of the estimated cost. The average yield was eight bags per acre, giving a total production of 2,400 bags of paddy, valued at  $\text{₹ } 168,000$ . The estimated net return to operational capital was  $\text{₹ } 90,325$ , or 116 per cent.

The net revenue from the above estimate suggests at least that rice farming on a large-scale was potentially very profitable. But it also underestimates its profitability because, as we shall see, it assumes that all of the rice was sold to the Government Rice Mills at 'official' prices. We have already noted that most big rice farmers sold the greater part of their rice at black market prices. While the majority of the large rice farmers did not make a profit on such a scale from year to year, we

might safely estimate that between 30 and 40 per cent of these made very substantial profits at least every second or third harvest.

The extent to which rice production was profitable to some of these farmers was well-illustrated by Mr. Ampah, the Managing Director of the Government Rice Mills in Tamale. His 400 acre farm was situated off the Kumasi Road, about twenty-five miles south of Tamale. During the 1977/78 harvest he produced 2,000 bags of paddy and realised sales of over ₵ 200,000. His output for the two previous years on the same farm averaged between 1,000 and 1,200 bags each year. He had already paid all outstanding loans from the proceeds of previous harvests.<sup>11</sup> According to Ampah, his profits in 1977/78 were "sufficiently substantial" to enable him to purchase a new "Mercedes Benz 230" for cash.

This farmer was not alone in making profit on such a large scale. Alhaji Sumani Zakaria was another. Despite overall bad weather conditions in the North during some years, Zakaria boasted of producing more rice on his farms each year "than the whole of the Upper Region put together".<sup>12</sup> He claimed that in the four years leading to 1977/78, he produced more than 10,000 bags of rice per year on average.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps no other farmer in the region produced on such a regular scale, although some came very close and produced larger outputs during the occasional year. Alhaji Kpabia, for example, produced 24,000 bags in 1978/79 from 2,000 acres, while in 1976/77 and 1977/78 he harvested 8,000 and 4,600 bags respectively from 800 acres.<sup>14</sup> Alhaji Sule, the Gushie Na, one of the largest rice farmers in the North in terms of acreage - 3,000 acres in 1978 - produced 22,000 bags in 1973, 20,000 in 1974, and 8,000 in 1977. The intervening years were 'poor' in comparison.<sup>15</sup>

Why was it that large-scale farmers were able to achieve such a relatively high level of productivity (and profitability) when, as we have seen, most small-scale farmers could hardly break even let alone make

a profit? The crucial difference lay in the relatively low use of labour by large-scale farmers, given the high cost of labour, together with the subsidised cost of alternative inputs. Commercial success depended therefore upon a number of factors: substituting mechanical methods for labour, obtaining such mechanical inputs at a potentially profitable (i.e. subsidised) cost relative to the prevailing 'price' of the product, and better still, obtaining more than the 'official' price for a large proportion of the product. All of these of course depended upon 'contacts', and which the large-scale rice farmer was better equipped to exploit.

#### Big Rice Farmers, the 'Kalabule' Trade and Profitability

The extremely high (black market) level of prices which prevailed in Ghana (not only for rice but for all goods) was the central feature of the 'kalabule' syndrome. 'Kalabule' was used to describe a ruthless phenomenon of profiteering and corruption which characterised Ghanaian society during the Acheampong years, but which continued unabated throughout the Limann administration (1979/81). Even the ruthless attempts by Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) failed initially to curb the 'kalabule' thrust.

The main cause of such rampant profiteering was the exchange rate policy and the attempt to regulate imports and prices for agricultural products. When Acheampong (NRC) was installed into office in 1972, one of his first measures, as we have seen, was to re-value the currency and this practically negated the effect of the December 1971 devaluation by the Busia regime. At the same time the country was suffering from a severe balance of payments situation which led the NRC to introduce a system of import and price controls. Despite a widening gap between official and black market rates of exchange, the Acheampong regime refused

to devalue the currency - perhaps because it had to justify its own seizure of power in January 1972 when it removed Busia on the grounds of having devalued the currency. By 1976/77, the black market rate of exchange had increased alarmingly to between six and eight times the official rate of exchange, and by 1979 this had increased further to about ten times the official rate. The regime attempted to control such an alarming increase in black market profiteering by adopting a rigid system of price controls, but as this was administered by corrupt officials (who were also actively engaged in such profiteering), it made no significant impact upon the control of prices.

Some scholars of the Ghanaian economy, notably Jeffries, have argued that the regime's policy of import control, combined with "chronic excess demand", led directly to an increase in government borrowing from commercial banks which in turn led to imported goods being sold at exceedingly high prices.<sup>16</sup>

The 'kalabule' trade had serious implications for the rice industry in the North in terms of its effect upon official purchases and on the supply of mechanical farm services to farmers. As far as the sale of paddy was concerned, purchases fell well below official targets for most years, with two notable exceptions: 1974/75 which was a 'bumper' crop year, and 1977/78 when government prices increased from  $\text{¢} 50$  to  $\text{¢} 70$  a bag (Table 5.3). The low level of purchases during other years was due to overall low productivity, especially during 1976/77, but was also due to the intense smuggling activities of the bigger farmers. The bulk of the rice produced in the North was either smuggled out of the country or hoarded and sold at very high 'market' prices. The smuggling of rice was not effectively checked by the authorities since of course they were involved in it. According to the Rice Mills, the smuggling of paddy in the North amounted to between four and five times what was sold to the government every year.<sup>17</sup>

TABLE 5.3: Purchase of Paddy by Government Rice Mills, Tamale, During 1970/71 - 1977/78

<u>Year</u>	<u>Target (Bags)</u>	<u>Total Purchased</u>
1970/71	-	47,400
1971/72	-	42,244
1972/73	-	28,108
1973/74	146,920	78,616
1974/75	146,920	340,790
1975/76	262,700	55,519
1976/77	382,700	18,689
1977/78	382,700	141,206

Source: Government Rice Mills, Tamale, 1978.

Smuggling was profitable for two main reasons. First, rice fetched a substantially higher (nominal and real) price in the neighbouring countries than it did on the home market. It was always difficult to obtain reliable information from the farmers about current prices in neighbouring countries (since no-one wanted to be associated with smuggling), but it was believed that prices in some countries fetched "up to four times more" than in Ghana.<sup>18</sup> Officials at the Rice Mills believed that the "official" price of paddy was "between 20 and 50 per cent below prevailing market prices".<sup>19</sup> This was a gross under-estimation of the real situation and illustrated either ignorance on their part or plain wishful thinking. The other main reason why rice was smuggled out of Ghana was because it brought foreign exchange which could be used by the farmers for purchasing foreign goods. Unlike the

cedi, it was worth something.

Farmers who did not have the connections or the facilities to smuggle could still fetch very high prices by selling on the local market. It was, in fact, common practice for farmers to hold back a portion of their crop until the off-season when market prices were at their highest. Hoarding was not confined only to the big farmers; some small farmers, as we have seen, engaged in it - it was their only means really of earning a 'decent' income.

The sale of rice at black market prices was one very important source of profit for producers. The supply of scarce mechanical services (tractors and combine harvesters) to non-owners was another lucrative source of profit to those owners with connections. These farmers were given import licences which were used to purchase agricultural machinery and equipment which were hired out to smaller farmers or non-owners at very high rates. Such 'business' was the source perhaps of even greater profit than the actual production of rice, especially as there was no official 'control' over rates levied by private owners. By 1978, these owners of machinery were charging between  $\text{¢} 90$  and  $\text{¢} 120$  per acre for ploughing, and between  $\text{¢} 50$  and  $\text{¢} 60$  extra per acre for harrowing. Moreover, before owners hired out their machinery, farmers were required in most cases to supply their own lubricants and fuel. Thus the hire of farm machinery by private owners represented a quick and cheap means of amassing wealth.

The 'kalabule' trade therefore contributed directly to the very large profits which the very prominent rice farmers realised under Acheampong. Even when their individual output was relatively low, as indeed they were from time to time, these farmers still made large profits from hiring out their machinery. But what were the causes of low output among the big rice farmers?

### Causes Affecting Output of Large-Scale Farmers

Despite the large-scale rice farmers' overall advantage in terms of their access to inputs and resources generally, their average output was only marginally better than that of the small-scale producer during the 1977/78 harvest. Interviews with the farmers suggested that the pattern was not significantly different during the previous three or four years. While our sample survey showed that the small rice farmers produced 2.1 bags of paddy per acre on average during 1977/78, the large farmers did only fractionally better at 2.74 bags per acre during the same period. The concept of 'average' output must, however, be treated with great care. While some farmers experienced very poor yields more regularly than others, a number of these farmers (especially those with adequate farm machinery) produced well above 'average' (i.e. average based on our sample survey) yields regularly, even under the most unfavourable conditions.

All rice farmers were affected, though not necessarily to the same extent, by the bad weather conditions which hit the region so severely from about the middle 1970s. But certain types of hazards, such as bush fires,<sup>20</sup> had a greater total effect upon large farms than they had upon small ones. For example 44 per cent of the big farmers in our sample claimed that their farms were affected by bush fires in 1977/78 from which approximately 4,700 acres were destroyed. Alhaji Zakaria lost an entire farm of 1,200 acres at Jimle in that year.<sup>21</sup>

The vulnerability of farms to bush fire was vastly increased by the serious shortage of combine harvesters in the region. Table 5.4 shows the distribution of combine harvesters among farmers in our survey. Only 20 per cent of the large-scale rice farmers in our sample owned combine harvesters: a total of twenty-six between them. According to the Ministry of Economic Planning, there were about 180 combine harvesters

TABLE 5.4: Large-Scale Rice Farmers, Northern Region, Distribution of Combine Harvesters (Private)

<u>Farmers</u>	<u>No. of Combines</u>	<u>Total Farm Acreage</u>
Alhaji Mumuni	1	460
Amandu	1	200
Alhaji Alhassan Osuman	1	200
Fuseini	1	250
Alhaji Ibrahim Yahaya	1	300
R.I. Alhassan	1	500
Alhaji Yakubu	2	600
Alhaji Salifa Abdul-Rahamani	2	600
Alidu	3	850
Alhaji Huseini	1	1,000
Moutrage	3	1,590
Angenu	2	1,100
Alhaji Sumani Zakaria	5	3,000
Gushie Na	2	3,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>13,650</b>

Average acreage to be harvested per combine = 525 acres.

Source: Survey of Large Scale Rice Farmers, N/R, 1978.

distributed throughout the Northern Region at the start of the 1978 farming season, of which the Ministry of Agriculture with 37 of these, was the largest stockist.<sup>22</sup> One of the largest hiring agencies, DEMCO, owned 10 of these harvesters, while the Nasia Rice Company had about 20 which were serviceable; the majority were owned privately.

A large number of the combine harvesters in the region were inoperative during the 1977/78 harvest due to breakdown or lack of spares. For example, only 75 per cent (27) of those owned by the Ministry of Agriculture were operational during 1977/78<sup>23</sup>, while it was estimated that only 60 per cent of all combine harvesters in the Northern Region as a whole were operational.<sup>24</sup> The shortage of spares for combine harvesters (as indeed for all other items of agricultural machinery) was a reflection of the over-optimistic assumption made in the early days of the Acheampong regime as regards the future foreign exchange position. That position, as we have seen, deteriorated when cocoa prices began to fall and corruption among public officials and members of the government increased to an unprecedented scale, thus rapidly depleting the country's foreign reserves.

Again, referring to Table 5.4 above, it will be seen that the mean acreage to be harvested per combine harvester was 525 acres - slightly above their estimated operational capability of 500 acres per combine harvester. But with a high proportion of these machines out of service, the burden on owners increased considerably. Given also that only 60 per cent of the combine harvesters in the region were actually put into service during 1977/78, (and with an estimated 90,000 acres of rice to be harvested mechanically)<sup>25</sup> the problems which (some) farmers faced could not, therefore, be underestimated.

The overall situation was not helped by the inflexible, if understandable, policies of the hiring agencies, especially DEMCO, which

did not find it 'economical' or 'safe' to allow their combine harvesters to travel long distances between farms. Of course this policy was not unrelated to the bad state of the roads and the insufficient attention given to the problem by the government. According to its Executive Director, the Company had been forced in the past to turn down several applications for its machinery mainly because farms were located well outside the thirty-six mile radius of Tamale within which it operated, and where roads were generally impassable by combines.<sup>26</sup> Such policies had the effect of forcing some farmers to look well outside the region for the services of combine harvesters, as illustrated by the example of Dwumfuoh who obtained the (belated) service of one such harvester from the Ashanti Region in 1977/78.<sup>27</sup> The search for alternative sources, with the inevitable delays, often resulted in great loss of crop from drying follicles (especially as the harvest coincided with the severe harmattan), as well as exposing the field to the additional risk of bush fire.

A number of forces were therefore at work to account for the poor level of output among some big farmers in the region. Statistics were not available, unfortunately, as to what proportion of the rice crop to be harvested failed each year, but according to unofficial opinion, the three harvests immediately following the 1974 'bumper' crop realised an estimated annual loss of between 40 and 50 per cent on average.<sup>28</sup> This opinion was reinforced by a Bank Project Consultant whose team visited several rice farms during the 1977 season and reported that "between 30 and 40 per cent of the crop was lost due to failure to harvest on time".<sup>29</sup> Of course bush fires and drought were not the only causes of low output by some large-scale rice farmers; poor crop yields were caused, though to a lesser extent, by inadequate land preparation. Field officers at the Ministry of Agriculture estimated that about 25 per cent of owners

of tractors and equipment (ploughs and harrows) were not sufficiently trained in their use so as to produce efficient land preparation.<sup>30</sup>

The causes of low productivity among the big rice farmers were therefore varied. Some of these 'causes', for example bush fire, could be 'controlled' (or its risk minimised at least) by the proper timing of the harvest which depended in turn upon the availability of combine harvesters. The relatively low output of some of the big farmers, however, did not necessarily represent a loss of profit since, as we have seen, these farmers either smuggled or traded their produce on the black market at prices several times above the official price.

The ability of the big farmers to smuggle vast quantities of rice out of the country depended of course upon 'contacts'. We will now examine the types of relationship that developed between these farmers and which were also crucial for the launching of their clandestine activities.

#### Social and Economic Relationships Between Large-Scale Rice Farmers

The big farmers co-operated in several ways for purposes of deriving reciprocal benefits which might be conducive to their individual or group needs. It was also a response, in a way, to the declining economic situation, through which they hoped to secure adequate inputs and services, including transport, for the efficient conduct of their farming. The network of relationships that developed between these farmers was based upon 'gate' or 'skin' identifications.

The small farmers also responded to the general economic situation by grouping themselves (also according to chieftaincy ties), whenever possible, with a view to deriving collective benefits from available resources. But they did not have either the influence or the political connections that were necessary to tap these resources, so in effect any

relationships which developed between them proved highly unproductive in terms of material benefits. There were examples of small farmers receiving assistance from the big and prominent ones who acted as 'patrons' in order to consolidate political followings, but any such help was generally very limited and was directed to supporters of one's own gate. The difficulties which small farmers encountered in obtaining inputs while their bigger counterparts acquired these with relative ease, formed the basis of a potentially serious conflict between the small and big farmers, especially between those who were on opposite chieftaincy sides. These small farmers regarded the big ones as either appropriating resources that were made available by government or, what amounted to more or less the same thing, using their considerable influence to monopolise the use of such available resources.

The complex network of relationships which developed among the big rice farmers found expression in various ways. Those farmers with inadequate machinery, especially combine harvesters, were supplied with such services by other group members. Benefits deriving from group membership was of course reciprocal in nature: farmers gave something in return for 'favours'. The nature of such reciprocity depended upon the individual's personal circumstances, and what in fact he had to offer. For example, in return for ploughing and harvesting for two of his colleagues, Alhaji Abdul-Rahamani obtained from them transportation services which were used to carry fertilizer from Tema to his farms in the North, and to convey goods to various commercial centres throughout Ghana, such as Bolgatanga, Navrongo and Bawku in the Upper Region, and Kumasi, Accra, and Secondi-Takoradi in the South.<sup>31</sup>

The reciprocity between farmers was not necessarily confined to such 'routine' matters as the exchange of tractor or combine harvester services for transportation services. They might be of a more

'permanent' nature. As Alhaji Abdul Rahamani put it, some of the services rendered by one farmer to another might "seal the bonds of trust and friendship" between the parties concerned.<sup>32</sup> Thus, as a result of the "friendship" between Alhaji Zakaria and the Kukuo Na which was "sealed" after the chief directly intervened to secure for him about 500 acres of extremely fertile land in the Karaga valley in 1975, Zakaria ploughed (and harvested) the chief's 400 acre farm every year at 'control', i.e. subsidised prices. Zakaria was also given a regular supply of lubricants by this chief who received supplies through 'reliable contacts' in Upper Volta.<sup>33</sup>

Relationships of this nature were not restricted to small groups of two or three farmers, but might be extended to include several others, depending upon the needs, bargaining strength, or influence of the individual parties concerned. Thus Alhaji Sumani cultivated farms for several commissioners based in Accra, in addition to supervising those of two senior military officers who were stationed in the North. The Director of the Cotton Development Board also farmed for commissioners (notably the Brong Ahafo Regional Commissioner, Colonel Thompson), using tractors owned by the Board. The Director of Nasia Rice Company also used the Company's vast resources (tractors, combine harvesters, bull-dozers) to cultivate rice farms for senior military officers, commissioners, including Major Kotei (the Army Commander) and some high-ranking public officials.

This fraternity of rice farmers consisted of an elite group made up of commissioners, executives, high-level civil servants, businessmen, and of course prominent rice farmers. Because of their relationship to positions of influence these people were able to monopolise resources so that, invariably, they were in a position to offer something of mutual benefit to each other. More crucially, they formed the nucleus of a

group of farmers around whom smuggling was organised. Of course smuggling required the co-operation of several agents, but because of their contacts and efficient level of organisation, farmers could overcome such obstacles as border checkpoints and customs with remarkable ease. Government officials (who might be rice farmers with a vested interest in smuggling) would intervene either directly or indirectly to facilitate the process. For example, during April 1978, the Northern Regional Commissioner issued strict instructions to Border Guards to allow several consignments of rice from Savelugu and Tamale to cross into Upper Volta.<sup>34</sup> Colonel Zumah, a former Northern Regional Commissioner (who was also a very big rice producer), was well-known for the assistance which he gave to colleagues in smuggling rice and other goods out of Ghana. His activities extended well beyond the borders of the Northern Region and into the Upper Region. I was reliably informed by an Upper Regional large-scale rice farmer how in 1975 Colonel Zumah, who comes from this region, personally escorted to Paga (Ghana/Upper Volta border) a lorry bound for Upper Volta carrying 600 bags of rice belonging to my interviewee, and had it cleared at the checkpoint "like a flash of tropical lightning".<sup>35</sup>

As we have already pointed out, the social network which involved the big rice farmers developed around local chieftaincy affiliations and support for the Acheampong regime. The Abudulai rice farmers also formed parallel relationships, but the scale of their operation, and their level of achievement, was considerably limited in comparison, since they did not enjoy the institutional support or the privileges that were reserved for their rivals. In other words, they did not have much to offer to each other by way of mutual aid.

The forms of relationship that have been described above were confined to the very privileged among the class of big rice farmers.

In the following section we proceed to discuss a completely different type of relationship between farmers belonging to this class or, more precisely, between the privileged and non-privileged members of this group of large-scale rice farmers.

#### Conflict within the Class of Big Rice Farmers

Within the class or group of big rice farmers was a sub-group which at first gave the impression of belonging to a different 'class', but who were in other respects members of the group of large-scale rice farmers. These consisted mainly of farmers who started farming comparatively recently - generally after 1974 - when the banks were cutting down drastically on their financial support to farmers. Both groups had several features in common: large acreages, membership of the Rice Growers' Association, chieftaincy allegiances. The main difference between the two was in the ownership of agricultural machinery, a distinction which formed the basis of the conflict between them. There was another very important difference: members of the sub-group did not have the 'connections' of their privileged counterparts.

This situation gives rise to one very important question: why did these farmers hold such vast amounts of land which they could not manage to cultivate efficiently? The answer rests in part with the mistaken belief that big acreages increased the chances of making a quick 'kill', but also with a concern more for status than with economic profitability. Size was related to status, so that the 'big' farmer became socially acceptable. The most important single factor influencing the possession of farms of such unmanageable proportions was the fact that the use of land was obtained 'free', i.e. agricultural land was not bought but leased to the farmer upon payment of a small (nominal) fee, or the presentation of a 'gift' to the custodians of the land. Although

custodians were not always 'generous' with land leased to rice farmers, there were no established rules governing its allocation, so that the discretionary policy adopted meant that a farmer who could establish a good relationship with a custodian (chief) was virtually assured of as much land as he possibly needed, or even more. As far as the majority of farmers were concerned, the ultimate objective was the size of the farm, not the quality of the farming.

As a result of their lack of mechanical equipment these farmers had to rely to a very large extent upon owners of machinery or other sources to cultivate their land, or most of it. Or they might depend upon sources from outside the region to provide tractor services which sometimes involved the payment of large sums in bribes. Furthermore, these farmers experienced considerable delay in gaining the services of farm machinery, whether tractors or combine harvesters.

We will now address ourselves to the question of who these discontented farmers were, their relationship to the local political system, and then go on finally to examine how the conflict made itself manifest. The discontented farmers within this group were generally supporters of the Abudulai gate. As we have already seen, these did not derive any important benefits from the local patronage system, since their side did not enjoy the privileges that were reserved for the Andanis. It consisted also of a few Andani supporters who objected in the main to the disparity between one group of farmers and the next. But Andani discontent was different in nature to that of the Abudulais. We will distinguish this difference by illustrating the nature of Andani discontent among this underprivileged group of farmers with the 'typical' example of Tahidu Inusah.

Inusah started rice farming in 1975 and had a 500 acre field in Diari, but was never able to cultivate more than half of this area in

any one season. He did not own any machinery but was generally able to hire one from the local agencies or from private owners. With the help of a loan from Barclays Bank he was also able to purchase fertilizer from the local Depot, although from time to time he had to supplement his allocation by buying from private traders.

Inusah was a strong supporter of the Andani gate and campaigned for the government during the referendum on Union Government. As a result, he expected the regime to reward him with loans which he intended to use to purchase machinery, and was clearly frustrated when that did not materialise. He believed that the leading members of the RGA enjoyed an unfair advantage because of their close connection to political leaders. According to this farmer, these "big men" represented their own interests rather than those of the farmers as a whole. He argued as follows:

They have to realise that we (Andanis) came to power because of the effort of all our supporters, and not only of a few big men. I campaigned for "Yes" in all the villages around Tamale ... I am a number one supporter of Na Andani. Some of the big men in the Association are not members of Andani ... they are not even from the North, and they are the ones who get all the help from the government ... is this fair? 36

Inusah insisted that a more equitable system of resource allocation was needed. He was not opposed to "big men" as such, since, according to him, it was every farmer's ambition to become big. However, he felt very strongly about "the way and manner" these people sought to promote their personal interests before those of the Association as a whole. According to him, unless "these greedy men change their attitudes there will be no hope for the rest of us".<sup>37</sup>

This was perhaps the crux of the matter. Andani supporters wanted a change in the 'attitudes' of the leaders, not in the existing social and political system itself. To dismantle the system of patronage existing in Dagbon would most certainly reduce the influence of the Andanis. Such a possibility was totally unacceptable to Andani

supporters, irrespective of their relationship to positions of influence.

As one of them fittingly put it:

We can only complain about how some farmers on our side get all the help from Government, but they are still on our side ... Alhaji Sumani (Zakaria) is Andani ... Ziblim Andan is Andani ... Ibrahim Mahama is Andani. If we rise up against them we are only going to make our own position very weak and make our enemies (Abudulais) stronger. So all we can do in this situation is to meet the big farmers and make them understand our own needs ... that's all.<sup>38</sup>

If the problem of allocation and distribution of scarce farming resources led to a mere recognition of the existing situation by Andani supporters, it did, however, bring out a full manifestation of conflict between the Abudulai supporters and those privileged rice farmers in the Association. The Abudulais were affected in one way or another by the overall shortage of farm inputs and the general difficulties facing all farmers, but their position was rendered even more precarious by the institutional bias against them. They were virtually isolated, and found it extremely difficult to operate effectively within the 'system'. Their underprivileged position weakened seriously their ability to conduct their farming operations meaningfully, since their relationship with banks and agricultural agencies were generally strained. Such a denial of opportunities finally led to the conflict between them and the prominent rice farmers.

Such conflict often surfaced at RGA meetings where the Abudulais were strongly represented, or even at personal levels of representation between the Abudulais and the authorities. During one such representation to the Regional Office by B.A. Yakubu on behalf of the Regent of Savelugu in June 1978, Yakubu protested (to the Regional Commissioner) against the political pressures that were being put on the Regent for failing to perform the funeral of his father (the former Yo Na), who had died several years earlier. Yakubu maintained that his client

had not performed the funeral, a sumptuous occasion both in terms of eating and drinking, because he had experienced a series of bad harvests. He emphasised, however, that the situation had not improved by the authorities' continuous refusal to grant the Regent either a loan or other facilities to obtain the relevant inputs which were vital for successful farming in the North. It was, he warned, a situation that might eventually lead to "open confrontation" between the two sides (the Abudulais and the Andanis), "since the authorities could not go on to systematically exclude one family and their supporters from participating in the development process, and of the right to improve their material well-being".<sup>39</sup>

For the moment, however, the main arena of 'confrontation' between the two 'sides' was the RGA general meetings where the Abudulai faction continued to press their claims against unfair discrimination by the leadership. It reached a culmination at one such meeting in 1977, when the Abudulai supporters called on the entire executive to resign because of their general incompetence. Unfortunately for the Abudulais, this strategy had the unforeseen effect of reinforcing the position of the Andani faction within the RGA by having the leaders officially endorsed as 'agents' or representatives of government policy within the Association.<sup>40</sup>

In this Chapter we attempted to demonstrate that only those privileged and well-connected big rice farmers with easy access to resources (and smuggling) actually made a profit from rice farming. The less privileged ones depended upon these farmers or local agencies to tackle their own activities, but the overall shortage of inputs caused mainly by the rapid decline of the Ghanaian economy, together with the local system of patronage, led to an ever-increasing frustration on the part of the weaker farmers, and sometimes to 'confrontation' between these and their prominent counterparts.

But as we might have already inferred, chieftaincy was central to an understanding of the existence and continued domination of a powerful group of rice farmers in the North. We will proceed in the next chapter to examine its social, economic and political importance.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Interview with Mr. Nutakor, GGADP agronomist, Tamale, 1 July 1978.
2. The Standard Bank in Tamale, for example, did not consider anyone with less than 50 acres for loans, and gave priority to those customers with around 100 acres. According to the Bank, the best results were achieved by farmers with farms of that size. Interview with R.A. Boamah, Agricultural Consultant, Standard Bank, Tamale, 6 July 1978.
3. D. Rothchild, "Military Regime Performance: An Appraisal of the Ghana Experience, 1972-1978". Mimeographed; cited in Bates, op. cit., p. 57.
4. Bates, op. cit., p. 58.
5. Shepherd, op. cit., p. 88.
6. Interview with A. Klubi, Deputy Manager, Barclays Bank, Tamale, 15 July 1978.
7. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Tamale, 26 June 1978.
8. Ibid.
9. Interview with Yakubu, RGA Chairman, Tamale, 7 June 1978.
10. The Organiser claimed that he used his influence to help three of his brothers to secure loans from two different banks to purchase three tractors and one combine harvester between 1976 and 1977. Interview with A. Alidu, RGA Organising Secretary, Tamale, 24 April 1978.
11. After the 1976/77 harvest this farmer paid off all outstanding debts to the bank (about ₵ 68,000) which included loans used to purchase his five tractors. Informal discussion with Mr. Ampah, Tamale, 16 August 1978.
12. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, 24 June 1978.
13. Ibid.
14. Alhaji Kpabia, interview and correspondence dated 10 July 1978 and 2 March 1979 respectively.
15. Interview with Gushie Na, Tamale, 20 June 1978.
16. R. Jeffries, "Rawlings and the Political Economy of Underdevelopment in Ghana", African Affairs, Vol. 81, No. 324, July 1982.

17. Interview with Rice Mills Manager, Tamale, 28 August 1978.
18. My informant, Iddrisu, believed that the best prices were obtained in Togo and Upper Volta where his senior brother sold "more than 80 per cent" of his annual output.  
Informal discussion, Tamale, 1 September 1978.
19. Interview with Rice Mills Manager, 28 August 1978.
20. Bush fires are a seasonal activity undertaken by farmers and villagers who burn fields to get rid of unwanted crop residue, such as stalks and vines, and tall grasses around the villages.
21. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, 24 June 1978.
22. Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale, 1978.
23. Interview with Director of Transport and Mechanisation Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, 30 August 1978.
24. Ibid.
25. Ministry of Economic Planning, Tamale, 1978.
26. Interview with Mr. Opoku, Executive Director of DEMCO, Tamale, 5 July 1978.
27. Interview with P.K. Dwumfuoh, Tamale, 7 June 1978.  
Dwumfuoh believed that he lost about one-third of his crop during the 1977 harvest through shattering caused by the long delay in getting a combine harvester from Ejura (Ashanti Region) to his farm in the Northern Region.
28. Interview with Nutakor, 1 July 1978.
29. Interview with A. Boamoah, 6 July 1978.
30. Interview with Nutakor, 1 July 1978.
31. Interview with Alhaji Salifu Abdul Rahamani, Tamale, 10 July 1978.
32. Ibid.
33. Interview with Kukuo-Na, Tamale, 7 July 1978.
34. This account was given by a Border Guard officer and confirmed by one of the farmers involved.
35. Interview with Bolgatanga rice farmer, 30 July 1978.
36. Interview with Tahir Inusah, Tamale, 11 September 1978.
37. Ibid.
38. Interview with Musah Salifu, Savelugu, 11 August 1978.

39. Interview with B.A. Yakubu, at Wulshe Na's Palace, Tamale, 26 July 1978.
40. Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Abudulai, Tamale, 10 September 1978. See Chapter 7 for a detailed account of this incident.

## CHAPTER 6

### LARGE-SCALE RICE FARMERS, CHIEFTAINCY AND THE STATE

We have already seen that the Acheampong regime's programme for encouraging rice cultivation in the North favoured those with the status, influence and connections necessary to obtain bank loans and to gain access to fertiliser and mechanised inputs at government-subsidised prices. An important element in such status, however - an important intervening variable, as it were, between the individual aspirant rice-farmer and the government and other official institutions - lay (for Dagombas at least) in one's relationship to the Dagbon chieftaincy. In this chapter we will therefore examine the social, economic and political importance of the Dagbon chieftaincy and show how certain groups, including large rice-farmers who were aligned with the ruling Andani family or "gate" (either through membership or voluntary support) derived huge benefits from that gate's political alliance with the ruling military regime. Members and prominent supporters of that gate had access to mobility opportunities via Andani patron/client networks.

#### Economic Importance of Chieftaincy in Dagbon

Traditional rulers in the North had always enjoyed a high degree of prestige among their subjects. Chiefs were regarded by their subjects as both spiritual and political leaders, and they also played an important economic role in their community.

Although colonial rule undermined their authority to some extent, it did not remove the legitimacy of the traditional rulers. On the contrary, the importance of the chiefs to the continued survival of the local administration was so vital that by 1932, as we have seen, the government was forced to incorporate these rulers into its system of "indirect" rule.

The continued practice by politicians in more recent times of manipulating the traditional political system in the North was more clearly demonstrated than ever before by the Acheampong regime's involvement in Dagomba politics from 1974 onwards when, as we pointed out earlier, it removed the reigning Abudulai paramount chief, Abudulai IV, and replaced him with the Andani candidate, Yakubu. Having effectively appointed the Andani candidate to the skins of Yendi, the regime undertook to protect its client's interest, for which in return it sought (and received) several rewards. The most important of these, as we shall see, was the campaign by the Andani faction in favour of Unigov.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the Andanis desperately needed the regime to remain in power since a change of government could lead to their own gate being deposed. This has been the pattern in Dagbon since the time of Nkrumah: each change of regime saw the rival faction petition the new government (often successfully) for the removal of the reigning paramount chief on the grounds that he was unconstitutionally installed. In their own interests, therefore, the Andanis fought tirelessly to win support for Acheampong in the North. The prize they received in return was the recognition of their status as an important "ally" of that regime, as well as access to various state institutions and top government officials in Accra, including Acheampong himself.

The alliance between the Andani faction and the Acheampong regime provided members and prominent supporters with one of the chief means by which economic gains could be achieved. As a result of this relationship, they received numerous benefits such as import licences and huge bank loans through the personal mediation of Acheampong. During the Unigov campaign several vehicles were allocated by the regime to its chief supporters in the North, and these were used for other private activities, such as commercial transportation.

Furthermore, the aspirant rice-farmers among the prominent supporters made important gains in the area of land allocation. One of the most important benefits (to the farmers) was in the business of land allocation. As land came under the control of village chiefs who were loyal to the ruling gate - this was achieved by the replacement of several Abudulai chiefs by members of the ruling faction - large areas of land were allocated to Andani supporters for farming purposes and denied to Abudulai supporters. Some of the best rice-fields in Dagbon were allocated between 1974 and 1977 to farmers whose support for the military regime was well known. Besides obtaining as much land as they wanted, these farmers also shifted freely from one area to the next, depending upon their individual needs. Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama, a well-known Tamale lawyer, acquired land for two rice-farms and a cattle-ranch between 1975 and 1976. As a prince from the Andani family he was left in no doubt as to the "importance of chieftaincy connections to successful business operations in the North".<sup>2</sup> Another prominent member of the Andani family who benefited enormously from his "status and privileged position" was Ziblim Andan of the Cotton Development Board. He owned two rice-farms in Karaga and helped to secure land there for "some very good people from Accra" whom he knew.<sup>3</sup> Richard Alhassan Alhassan, the

Dakpema (Tamale fetish priest) was another highly respected member of the Andani family who was very influential in several areas of decision-making, including the allocation of land to the Cotton Board of which he was the Chairman. Privileges were not restricted only to "blood" members of the Andani family, but were extended to all prominent supporters.

The importance of Andani-ship to aspirant rice-farmers did not lie simply, or even primarily, in the direct benefits which such an allegiance provided as regards rice-farming. Of course it helped to gain access to large acreages of suitable land, but as we have seen, this was not the main precondition for commercial success. The main precondition lay in access to (scarce) subsidised inputs and cheap bank loans, and the chiefs did not normally directly intervene here. But in order to gain such access one needed already to have some "capital" - and there were various ways in which the Andani chiefs could enable their most important supporters to become such "men of capital". The process by which Andani-ship enabled people to become commercially successful, large-scale commercial rice-farmers was generally, therefore, a somewhat indirect but cumulative one.

Despite their privileged status and the vast opportunities gained during the Acheampong period, the Andanis did not form a "class" defined initially in terms of ownership of the means of production which seeks to further its interests over and against another class. It was a matter of supporters of a local political faction (an ascriptive, traditional group in a sense) gaining privileged access to various state agencies, banks and local government positions in return for providing various services to the ruling military junta. The working of this reciprocal arrangement was referred to briefly in the last chapter when it

was mentioned that certain well-connected, large rice-farmers in the North cultivated land for several commissioners who were either based in the South or who, though based in the North, were too preoccupied with their official day-to-day duties. These arrangements will be elaborated further in the course of the remaining chapters. However, it is important to emphasise at the outset that this situation differed from a "class situation" most notably by virtue of its fragility and its dependence on the incumbency of Acheampong and his regime. The fall of Acheampong inevitably threatened, and later weakened considerably, the position of these farmers.

#### The Importance of Chieftaincy Connections to Large Rice-farmers

The enskinment of Mion-Lana Andani as Ya Na in 1974 coincided with the intensification of the rural development programme in the North and of rice-farming in particular. Since Acheampong had been instrumental in installing the Andani candidate, it was therefore only to be expected that supporters of this faction would in turn back his government. As we have already mentioned, the Andanis formed an "alliance" with the SMC which further ensured that their interests were well guarded - at least during the regime's period in office. The importance of the SMC to the Andanis was succinctly expressed by one of their princes who explained that since Acheampong intervened in Dagbon, local politics had changed, and the Andani family had enjoyed a new status of which it had been deprived until then. According to him, the family was accepted not only in Dagbon, but throughout Ghana. As he summed up: "The Regional Administration approve of us, they work hand-in-hand with us...and of course we are known by the Government in Accra....We are known throughout Ghana".<sup>4</sup>

The significance of this new era to the big (Andani) farmers was that the stage had been set for them to operate as an important and influential social group in Dagbon. According to Alhaji Zakaria, the most important advantage was that they (the big Andani farmers) were given access to people in high places. As he said, "It was important to become friends with the commissioners and 'big' men so that we may be able to get all our needs".<sup>5</sup> As a result of his personal contacts, Zakaria was able to obtain an Import Licence from the Government, which was used to purchase "several" items, including tractors, four of which were still waiting to be collected at Tema Harbour at the time of interview.<sup>6</sup>

Naturally, some farmers (especially those with strong business and professional connections among the prominent supporters) were in a more privileged position than others in terms of their relationship to positions of access, and these often bargained on behalf of their less influential colleagues. In this way several rice-farmers were able to obtain agricultural inputs and services which otherwise would not have been available to them. These services included the use of farm machinery - mainly tractors and combine harvesters - from the Ministry of Agriculture, DEMCO, the banks, or the Northern Regional Development Corporation (NRDC).<sup>7</sup> For example, the NRDC came to the assistance of one desperate rice-farmer after a prominent colleague and government supporter intervened on his behalf. According to Issah Mohammed, he had barely ploughed a hundred acres of his three-hundred-acre field when his tractor broke down. He contacted his "friend", Alhaji Abdul-Rahamani, a farmer with important connections, who took him directly to the NRDC where he was promised a tractor as soon as possible. Mohammed claimed that within three days he got the tractor and was able to plough the rest of his field.<sup>8</sup>

By far the most sensitive but important area of assistance was the granting of loans to the farmers. Lesser-known farmers could, and often did experience difficulties in securing loans and overdrafts from the commercial banks, but with the recommendation of a well-known and financially secure farmer, a loan could be negotiated. Alhaji Sumani Zakaria claimed that whenever he personally recommended a farmer to his bank manager for a loan - though he would not normally recommend one whom he knew could not make a success of his farming - that farmer would not, as a rule, be turned down.<sup>9</sup> Although it cannot be ascertained here precisely to what extent the influential big rice-farmers assisted their less privileged colleagues in obtaining loans, it is undoubtedly clear that, during the period of intensified rice production in the mid-seventies, banks were influenced by the recommendation of "established" farmers. The matter was put into some perspective by a senior officer of Barclays Bank in Tamale whose responsibility it was to interview and recommend farmers to the Bank for loans. According to this officer, it was always in the interest of the Bank to concentrate on farmers that were recommended by customers who had themselves established a good relationship with the Bank.<sup>10</sup> In that respect Alhaji Sumani Zakaria was well equipped, for his reputation as a successful farmer and businessman was beyond dispute, and besides he was involved in a network of political and economic relationships that extended far beyond the boundaries of the North. Several other influential big rice-farmers were instrumental in helping colleagues obtain loans from the banks. Foremost among these were Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama, Ziblim Andan, Dakpema Richard Alhassan Alhassan, and two prominent officers of the RGA, Alhaji Yakubu and Abu Alidu, who were Chairman and Organiser respectively.

Barclays Bank was not the only financial institution to be influenced by the recommendations of the "big" farmers; Standard Bank

was another. During the 1978 season this Bank, like most others in Tamale, had decided on cutting down drastically on its loans to farmers because of the increasing rate of default. Again, like other banks in the region, Standard was mainly concerned with recovering outstanding loans, so that only ten new farmers were sponsored by the Bank during that season, and with greater emphasis being placed on security backing.<sup>11</sup> In cases where farmers could not provide such security, usually to the value of two-thirds the size of the loan required, they could be considered only if supported by a "recognised" customer. Thus, of the ten new customers awarded loans by the Standard Bank in 1978, seven were backed by prominent and influential farmers or businessmen.<sup>12</sup>

Of course there were other avenues besides financial institutions and sources of inputs that were exploited by members of the Andani faction during the height of their power in Dagbon. The pro-Andani farmers were in a strong position to develop good relationships with local chiefs which were used to their full advantage as far as obtaining land leases in the North was concerned, especially around the most fertile rice valleys. Quite apart from securing large tracks of land for their own needs, these farmers were also able to obtain land for their Southerner friends, including military officers.

Although the period of Andani ascendancy in Dagbon during the mid-seventies witnessed a corresponding rise in status and opportunity for members and prominent supporters of that gate, it did not affect the unity of the Abudulai faction. In fact it could not; the Abudulais were a close-knit and well-organised social group which revolved around the leadership of Mahamadu Abudulai, the former Ya-Na and inspired leader of that faction. It was unlikely that they would allow unfavourable circumstances such as a "temporary" loss of power to affect

the fabric of their social organisation.<sup>13</sup> It was, however, in their specific relationship with government and banking institutions that the Abudulais suffered the most serious setback, though one or two were able to overcome the prevailing nepotistic system in Dagbon and operate fairly successful businesses and farming enterprises. One such prominent supporter was R.I. Alhassan, a Tamale lawyer and former CPP Member of Parliament who became a fairly successful rice-farmer during that period. Alhassan started rice-farming in 1969, long before the Andanis came to power, at a time when the institutional bias against the Abudulais did not exist. Since this farmer had the resources to finance his private enterprise independently of the banks - he claimed that by 1978 he had paid off his loans outright - he did not experience personally the resentment against the Abudulais by local farming agencies. Opposition was, however, directed at him for different reasons: his opposition to the concept of Unigov and to the Acheampong regime in general. It was a position that affected not only Alhassan, but Abudulai supporters en masse, for as a political group they were institutionally and systematically opposed to that regime.

Neither did the regime disguise its intolerance of the Abudulais. As we shall see later when we consider the activities of the regime in the North during the Unigov campaign, supporters of this faction were ruthlessly pursued and suppressed by its agents. Local opposition against the Abudulais reached its peak during the three or four months that preceded the 1978 referendum on Unigov, when members of this faction met increased resistance from all quarters, including the state-run enterprises. This does not imply that all officials were against the Abudulais; they had some supporters among public officials, especially at the Ministry of Agriculture, but these were holders of junior offices

and were not in any position to shift the balance of power or influence in their side's favour, or to be of any real assistance to individual members of their group. On the other hand, the managers of the main corporations or bodies, including of course some political organisations, were generally either members or supporters of Andani who were appointed by the regime directly or its local representatives.

These appointees co-operated fully with the regime (and its local agents) in implementing its policies which were generally unfavourable towards the regime's opponents. Sometimes executive heads of agencies who were neutral as far as factional politics was concerned, were required to "co-operate" with the regime in promoting its policies in the North which meant, invariably, showing favour towards its supporters. The executive of DEMCO, a privately-run enterprise (but which, like all other private farming agencies in the North, was granted tax concessions by the government) was strongly reprimanded by the Regional Office in November 1977 for hiring out one of its combine harvesters to a suspected anti-government (Abudulai) supporter in preference to an Andani farmer whose farm was situated well outside the company's operating zone. According to the Director, he was "warned" by the Regional Commissioner that his action was against the "spirit of OFY" and that in future he would be required to "co-operate" more fully with the government so as to achieve set goals.<sup>14</sup> Such tactics did produce the intended effect of showing favour to selected clients. As the Director said, although the company was a private concern, they were also participating in the government's agricultural programme, so that it was in their best interests "to take advice from those in high places".<sup>15</sup>

One of the most sensitive area of agricultural policy was the allocation of bank loans to farmers. It was common belief among the

regime's opponents that the local banks provided assistance only for its most prominent supporters. Although the banks considered opponents of the regime for agricultural loans (and a few Abudulai supporters did succeed in getting limited assistance) there were mechanisms which guaranteed that only selected farmers would be given substantial loans to conduct rice-farming on a large-scale basis. Through the banks' own rice-farmers' associations<sup>16</sup> advisory councils were set up to advise management on the suitability or otherwise of applicants. Such advisers consisted of the most experienced and successful farmers among the banks' customers and who, invariably, were members of the RGA. The NIB, for example, did not give any loans to farmers without "consulting fully" its experienced advisers who, in 1978, consisted of Ziblim Andan, Alhaji Abdul-Rahamani, and Chief Farmer Yakubu, all of whom were prominent Andani members or supporters, as well as leaders of the RGA. Barclays Bank also adopted a similar practice of consulting "experienced and successful" members of its farmers' association before making decisions about loans to farmers.<sup>17</sup> Alhaji Zakaria and Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama, two of Acheampong's most fanatical supporters in the North, served as advisers to the Bank. Both were leaders of the RGA, while Mahama was a prince of the Andani family, Zakaria was without doubt one of its leading supporters. It was unlikely, therefore, that these big and influential rice-farmers would recommend candidates for bank loans who were declared opponents of the regime and of their own gate.

The subtleties employed by the authorities to discourage or even exclude the opponents of the regime were clearly perceived by the Abudulai farmers. There was not a single Abudulai supporter in our survey of large-scale rice-farmers who claimed to have received a loan from the banks for the purpose of conducting his farming on such a scale.

B.A. Yakubu, a former Gushiegu chief and member of the former NLC, applied for one such loan and was turned down, according to him, without any reasonable explanation. Yakubu insisted that "the Abudulai family [were] not recognised because of their failure to recognise and support the Acheampong regime".<sup>18</sup> According to him, there was a deliberate policy on the part of the authorities of excluding that family from participating in the development process in general, and in the profitable rice-farming enterprise in particular. It was for this reason that he believed his application for a loan was rejected without any given reason, even though he was in a "very secure financial position to guarantee repayment".<sup>19</sup> It was the Andanis, he argued, who abused the banks by not repaying their loans, and despite that, they were still given priority everywhere in Dagbon. Yakubu further emphasised the widely-held opinion among Abudulai supporters that it was not only the banks that failed to recognise their side, but all other local institutions, including the Regional Administration. According to him, that was a "humiliating and intolerable situation" which would bring "open conflict" between the two sides if the situation was not quickly resolved.<sup>20</sup>

So far in this chapter we have been concerned with the interrelationship between chieftaincy and national level politics, and the importance of gate connections to Dagombas for successful rice-farming in the North. Access to suitable rice-fields was crucial to successful farming. Strictly speaking, land was not a scarce resource as far as the North was concerned, but by 1977/78 when there appeared to be a renewed interest in large-scale rice-farming after a "cooling-off" period in the previous two years or so, the resulting demand for suitable land by aspirant rice-farmers set off a series of intriguing manoeuvres involving

those aspirant farmers, their associates among the prominent farmers, and local chiefs. The process by which such activities were brought about is the subject of the following section.

#### Gate Connections and Land Allocation

We have seen the importance of Andani-ship in helping rice-farmers gain access to large acreages of suitable land. Sometimes this was achieved at the expense of Abudulai farmers. During the course of my fieldwork I discovered four distinct cases (among others) in which farmers in the North who were either supporters or members of the Abudulai gate were "dispossessed" in favour of pro-Andani farmers. The main reason given by the chiefs for stripping these farmers of their land, was that they had more than they could manage to cultivate. It was common experience throughout the North to find farmers (including both Andani and Abudulai supporters) with exceedingly large acreages, the greater part of which they could not cultivate because of the lack of initial capital and the shortage of farm inputs, such as mechanical equipment. As we have seen, this was one of the main sources of conflict between these farmers and the very big and well-connected (i.e., the fully-equipped) ones. The case of Abukari (and the supporting ones) suggest that there was a political motive behind the policy to deprive these farmers of their land. Of course it was all done in a very subtle way. While in some cases economic criteria would be used for retrieving the land (a perfectly valid case if applied universally), in others it might be a more straightforward case of gate politics. But each of these cases had one thing in common: the land was retrieved from these farmers at the behest of prominent Andani farmers who used their position to secure such land for their own friends.

But why should chiefs adopt the policy of retrieving land from farmers when there was such an abundance of this resource in the North?

The answer lies in a combination of factors. Although there was much farming land available in Dagbon, some of it, as we suggested earlier, was more suitable for rice cultivation than other, especially where such land was located near river valleys or tributaries of the Volta River. By 1976/77 most of this land had been taken by local farmers, though a large proportion remained uncultivated. Thus it was in the best interests of prospective rice farmers if they could gain possession of such fertile land, rather than seek new fields in areas that were generally considered inaccessible by road transport and less suitable for rice cultivation. Chiefs were persuaded by their big-farmer allies to allocate these lands to their new clients.

There was another crucial reason influencing the decision by chiefs to retrieve land from existing tenants. The leasing of farming land developed into a very lucrative business to chiefs who made very substantial gains both from bounties received after harvest and other facilities provided by the farmers. Although there were no specific rules laid down as to how much, if anything, a farmer should give to a chief or tindanaa after the harvest, it was customary, however, for farmers to "dash" something to the chief in appreciation. The amount given depended upon the farmer's yield of course, and could be anything up to twenty or thirty bags of paddy. Generally speaking, the chiefs stood to gain more from farmers who identified with, or supported his, rather than the rival gate.

The provision of free mechanical farm services was perhaps one of the most important and economically rewarding facilities offered by large rice-farmers to chiefs. Most of these chiefs had their own farms, so that the leasing of land to farmers who were in a position to plough and harvest for them was an important incentive, and cannot therefore be

underestimated. Thus the retrieval of land by chiefs from certain groups of farmers and allocating it to better-equipped and politically compatible clients made economic sense, and was of mutual benefit to both chief and client.

We will now examine the case of Abukari in some detail (and supported to a lesser extent by further examples) to see how the above factors working in combination with gate politics influenced the decision to retrieve land previously leased to these farmers.

Case Study: Abukari of Moshi Zongo, Tamale <sup>21</sup>

Abukari had acquired about two hundred acres of land near Janga, along the Volta tributary, in 1974, but had cleared and brought under cultivation about half that area by 1976. A few weeks before the beginning of the farming season in 1977, Abukari paid a visit to his farm where, to his amazement, he found that most of the remaining land had been cleared and that three tractors were ploughing through the entire field. He was informed by one of the tractor operators that they were carrying out orders by their "master". Abukari went to the village chief to complain. After all, he had been cultivating that land for three years and had spent his own money to clear it, so that according to him, he failed to see why someone else should "seize" his land. He was informed by one of the custodians (but not by the chief himself) that the land had been given to him in error as it did not come within the jurisdictional boundary of the village; for that reason it was being reclaimed.

A subsequent visit to the village by the author which aimed to establish the validity of Abukari's claim did not prove successful, since the chief involved was away from the village and not available for comment. One of the elders intimated, however, that the farmer involved was not

efficient, and that he had more land than he could manage. His land was therefore given to another farmer, who they (the custodians) were sure would utilise it better.<sup>22</sup> The practice of retrieving land from a farmer was not common in Northern Ghana, but as we have noted, it remained a possibility. Thus if it were true that Abukari failed to put his land to "good" use, or did not have the necessary resources to utilise it, the reason given for his eviction was valid according to the criteria for land retrieval.<sup>23</sup>

The case against Abukari, however, appeared to stand on very weak ground. As he argued, if it was established that he had too much land and could not cultivate all of it - and he readily admitted to finding great difficulty in cultivating the cleared portion of his field due to lack of capital - then the chief should have asked him to return only the surplus area instead of retrieving the entire field, as in fact happened. After being directed to the farm in dispute by a village guide to prove the "good" use to which the land was being put by the new tenant-farmer (an area of about four hundred acres, i.e., Abukari's plot plus an adjacent, newly-acquired field), we discovered three tractors equipped with implements ploughing that land. The identification plates on these tractors disclosed that two of them belonged to a senior military officer at "Mile 9" Barracks (Airborne Force) in Tamale, while the third was owned by the Ministry of Agriculture. After a lengthy discussion with one of the operators, it was finally admitted that the land belonged to the officer. In a subsequent interview with that officer he admitted to having acquired the land early in 1977 after being told by a friend how "a certain farmer [Abukari] was holding good land that he could not afford to cultivate".<sup>24</sup>

The officer concerned was introduced to the chief by S.Y. Imoru, an executive member of the RGA, and a very close ally of the Janga chief. Imoru himself farmed about five hundred acres in Janga, and did not experience any problems in persuading the chief to lease the land to the officer who paid the nominal fee of two hundred cedis, together with the customary supply of kola nuts and spirits.<sup>25</sup> The chief had a fifty-acre groundnut-farm which was located within a few hundred yards of the officer's, and which the officer agreed to plough free of charge. Because of its proximity to the White Volta the land was suitably located for irrigation, and this officer had already started negotiations for purchasing the appropriate machinery from West Germany. He claimed that he had never met Abukari, but was willing to compensate him, at least in part, for expenses incurred in clearing the land.<sup>26</sup>

While the promise to plough the chief's land was an important factor in influencing the decision to transfer the land to the officer, there were other motives involved. The chief was undoubtedly influenced by the status of the officer and his position of authority (he held the rank of Major in the Army). Military personnel had come to enjoy a position of great power and influence, and soldiers were regarded locally as the embodiment of state power. Furthermore, the military was directly responsible for restoring the chief's gate to power in Dagbon.<sup>27</sup> The involvement of the RGA official was also important. Imoru was a leading Andani supporter and therefore had a common political identity with the Janga chief, who was installed by the Ya-Na in 1975 following the de-skinment of the local Abudulai chief. He was also a leading Unigov campaigner (like all other prominent RGA farmers), and was well acquainted with the chief through his political activities in the village and the surrounding areas. Imoru was also instrumental in obtaining land

in Janga for two other military officers based in Accra.<sup>28</sup> It would appear that the collaboration between a top-ranking military officer and a prominent rice-farmer with Andani connections, together with the lucrative economic gains which such an association made possible, provided sufficient validity to justify the retrieval of land from Abukari who, after all, was a relatively "small" man by comparison. When the identity of the new tenant was later disclosed to Abukari, he quickly put his own position into perspective: "As for me, ooh! I no be fit to fight soldier man".<sup>29</sup>

Abukari's position in relation to the Andanis and the regime was unambiguous. Although not a blood member of the Abudulai gate, he was nevertheless a leading supporter and, according to him, a close friend of both the late Yo-Na, Abudulai IV, and the deposed (Abudulai) Regent of Savelugu. Abukari attended several meetings in Savelugu in support of the Abudulai gate, and in 1976 he was "chairman" of one such meeting held at the Old District Office in support of the Regent, Alhassan. He was also a well-known opponent and critic of Acheampong, and although he did not campaign openly for "No" during the referendum, his views about the incompetence of the government, especially as regards its farming policies, were frequently raised at RGA meetings which he attended. He was foremost among those members who regularly called for the resignation of the RGA executive. His position, therefore, made him an obvious target for supporters of the regime. The stripping of his land was the price paid for the strong anti-government/anti-Andani position which he held.

While Abukari's case demonstrated that farmers with "wrong" gate and political connections and attitudes could be "dispossessed" in favour of those with status, the other examples merely reinforce that position.

Alhassan Fuseini and Amadu Ahmed had each obtained two large tracts of land in Gushiegu in 1973 and 1974 respectively.<sup>30</sup> Fuseini cleared and cultivated about two hundred acres of his six-hundred-acre field, while Ahmed had less than half of his five-hundred-acre plot under cultivation. The lack of machinery and starting capital were given as the main reasons for failing to cultivate the rest of their land. In February 1978, both farmers were called by the Gushiegu chief (Andani) and told that their excess land would be retrieved and given to someone else. Despite these farmers' protests, their lands were reallocated to farmers who claimed to have the means to cultivate them. Fuseini's uncleared land was given to a senior employee of the Cotton Development Board in Tamale, while Ahmed's was allocated to a senior driver employed by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Both recipients were supporters of Andani. Seidu Harruna, who worked for the Cotton Development Board, was encouraged to take up rice-farming by Ziblim Andan (the Board's director) who, as we have seen, was one of the most influential members of the Andani family - Harruna's wife was related to the Dakpema.<sup>31</sup> Yakubu Mahama, who obtained a lease on land previously held by Ahmed, was both an active supporter and a member of the Andani family.<sup>32</sup> Before joining the Ministry in 1977, he was the District Secretary of the Ghana National Reconstruction Corps (GNRC), an organisation set up by Acheampong supposedly to promote agriculture in the regions, but which subsequently developed into a political wing of the SMC. Mahama's activities with the GNRC brought him into contact with most prominent rice-farmers in the North. Ziblim Andan was instrumental in helping both recipients obtain their plots in Gushiegu, where he had several farms himself.

The evicted farmers, on the other hand, were well-known and active Abudulai supporters. Fuseini, who lived in Gushiegu until 1974 when he came to Tamale, was secretary to B.A. Yakubu who was then Gushiegu chief (1969-1974). He was also in the forefront of the campaign in 1969 to have Mahamadu Abudulai elected as Ya-Na. Ahmed was among the best-known supporters of the Abudulai gate, and in January 1978 he was arrested twice in Savelugu, where he lived, for leading violent protests by Abudulai supporters during the Unigov campaign.

Finally, there was a case which concerned Osuman Alhassan of Savalugu, who was a direct member of the Abudulai family.<sup>33</sup> Alhassan had held a three-hundred-and-fifty-acre field in Nabogo since 1973, and had cleared approximately two hundred acres which he cultivated every year. According to this farmer, he was deprived of all his land (not just the uncleared area) in April 1978, without "reasonable" explanation by the custodians. A messenger from the village was sent to inform him of the chief's intention to retrieve his land on the grounds that he had left it uncultivated for too long. When Alhassan visited the farm a few days later, he found that most of the remaining land had been cleared, and soon afterwards the whole field had been ploughed. His land was given to a junior brother of the Kumbungu chief who had been newly installed by the Ya-Na.

Thus in each of the above examples the evicted farmers had strong connections with the Abudulai faction, and were outspoken critics of the Acheampong regime. Though on the basis of the above evidence it could not be convincingly argued that there was a deliberate attempt to "dispossess" such rice-farmers, there was no doubt that the powerful pro-Andani, pro-Acheampong farmers could, and often did, use their privileged position to increase their own landholdings or that of their clients.

### Gate Competition and Local Government

The influence of prominent supporters was by no means limited to their relations with village chiefs. Such influence extended throughout all political structures in Dagbon, especially the Dagomba District Councils.<sup>34</sup> The importance of these Councils to the individual chieftaincy gates lay in the fact they provided each side with the opportunity to be represented at local government level, and to formulate or influence policies that were in their side's best interests. Control of these Councils was crucial to both sides, but the big prize was the Western Dagomba District Council (WDDC) based in Tamale, a statutory planning area which exercised authority over a wide range of functions including health, sanitation, town planning, licensing and entertainment, public places, markets and lorry parks. The Council was also the sole rating authority in the area with exception, of course, of the central government, and controlled poll tax, property rates, and market tolls.

From 1978, the functions of local district councils in Ghana were radically extended, and the local elections of that year were regarded with greater interest than previously by the Northern people for reasons we shall see later. The new local government system attempted to fuse the previous functions of local authority with those of the local departments of decentralised ministries of central government such as Agriculture, Public Works, Planning, Community Development, Treasury, Parks and Gardens, Wildlife and Public Health. Under this new system of local government the elected representatives of the people would be responsible for taking major policy decisions, while the implementation of those policies would be carried out on a day-to-day basis by the District Chief Executive working in collaboration with local departmental heads. The new system represented a radical departure from the old order, and was regarded by the authorities as an important step towards

"effective decentralisation" which would lead to a "meaningful combination of scarce resources and manpower for accelerated development".<sup>35</sup> As far as the competing gate factions were concerned, therefore, it was important not merely to be represented on the Council, but to secure a working majority in order to exercise control over policies.

Between 1960 and the local government elections of 1978,<sup>36</sup> candidates were nominated to the Council by the District Chief Executive (DCE). The volatile nature of chieftaincy politics in Dagbon initially required that both sides in the dispute be represented equally on the Councils, at least as a gesture of impartiality on the part of the government. This principle was adopted, in theory at least up to about 1970, but the overwhelming predominance of Andani representatives on both Dagomba District Councils during the Acheampong period made a mockery of the principle of fair representation.

Under the system of nomination adopted by the SMC, members were recruited not so much on merit as on the basis of their political allegiance, and nominations were very strongly inclined towards the Andanis. Thus the composition of the former Eastern Dagomba District Council (EDDC) (i.e., prior to 1978) was made up of seventeen members representing the Andani faction, while the Abudulai side consisted of only six members.<sup>37</sup> Their minority position on the local Council effectively reduced the Abudulais' influence on EDDC business. Their views were simply not "officially" recognised, and their presence there was a mere formality.

The composition of the WDDC reflected a similar political bias. The fourteen nominated "commoner" members of that Council were divided equally between the two chieftaincy sides, but the balance of influence was shifted overwhelmingly in favour of the Andanis by the nomination of

seven of their members (chiefs) to represent the traditional "interest".<sup>38</sup>  
 The chiefs representing the traditional "interest" on the WDDC during the SMC period were as follows:

1. Gulkpe-Na, Abudulai Bukari I
2. Kumbung-Na, Sumani Issah
3. Nyankpalana, R.D. Damba
4. Zobogu-Na, J.S. Kaleem
5. Zanballon-Na, Abudulai Yakubu
6. Dakpema, Richard Alhassan Alhassan
7. Sanerigu-Na, Andani Andan.

One notable omission from the list of nominations was the Tolon-Na, Yakubu Tali, a divisional chief with wide experience in public life, who had been a Northern representative in the Legislative Assembly in the pre-independence period, and was subsequently elected a representative for the Tolon constituency in the CPP government. The Tolon-Na, however, was a leading member of the Abudulai gate, and also its chief spokesman, and an outspoken critic of the Acheampong regime. There was therefore no place for him as a representative of the traditional "interest" on the WDDC, even though each chief was supposedly "picked according to his status and ability".<sup>39</sup> Thus the deliberate exclusion of Abudulai chiefs from the WDDC under the prevailing system further demonstrated the nature of the scheme to consolidate Andani power and the influence of the Acheampong regime in Dagbon. Two of the junior chiefs representing the Andanis at the WDDC had status and influence extending far beyond the local political arena. The Sanerigu-Na was nominated because of his political influence in his capacity as Police Commissioner in charge of the Police Hospital in Accra,<sup>40</sup> while the Dakpema was the Chairman of the Cotton Development Board, as we have already seen. The third sub-chief

representing the Andanis was Zobogu-Na J.S. Kaleem, a former Regional Director of Education who, despite old age and physical decline, was nominated because of his "outstanding personal abilities".<sup>41</sup>

The strong Andani composition of the District Councils made them effective in interpreting and carrying out central government policy as illustrated by an incident during the 1978 referendum on Unigov. During the campaign,<sup>42</sup> Acheampong's agents called at the EDDC offices in Yendi to collect "Yes" posters only. The DCE advised that they collect both types (i.e., including "No" posters) to display to the public. A quarrel ensued in which the DCE was accused of being a "southerner" and an anti-Unigov man, at the same time having his authority challenged. After they had threatened the DCE, the mob forced its way into his office, collected the "Yes" posters and destroyed the "No" ones. A few days later this official was reported to the Castle (the SMC administrative centre in Accra) as a saboteur and enemy of the government.<sup>43</sup> The incident was subsequently raised by the small Abudulai contingent at a Council meeting, but it was never seriously considered since the Council decided that it had more important matters on hand.<sup>44</sup> Neither could the DCE persuade the Council to take up the issue since his authority was seriously undermined because he was suspected of being anti-Unigov.

We have seen that the composition of the Councils under the system of local government practised in Dagbon during the Acheampong period was decidedly biased in favour of the Andanis. The 1978 District Council elections, therefore, gave the Abudulais an opportunity to contest these elections in an attempt to win a majority and redress the balance of influence on the Dagomba District Councils. The important feature of these elections as far as Dagbon was concerned was the interest taken by rice-farmers who were allied to both chieftaincy gates. At least one of the contestants in each ward was a big rice-farmer.

### Farmers, Chieftaincy, and the 1978 Local Government Elections

The interest shown by some candidates in the 1978 local government elections was governed to a large extent by their desire to test their popularity as a preview to the 1979 elections. It should be mentioned, however, that in many local council areas participation in the elections was very low; many Ghanaians did not see these elections as an opportunity for meaningful democratic participation. The situation was different in Dagbon because of the predominance of factional politics there and the desire by each faction to win control of the local Councils.

Control of the local Councils, and more particularly the WDDC, would provide new opportunities for the winning side to influence policies affecting not only "traditional" matters, but those previously administered by central government departments, such as the Ministry of Agriculture. It was generally accepted by the farmers (large and small alike) that a decentralised Ministry of Agriculture would be in a better position to assess the needs of the local farmers and provide them with the necessary inputs. It was no accident, therefore, that large rice-farmers were so actively involved in these elections, irrespective of their gate allegiances. But what did these big rice-farmers stand to gain by contesting? Whose interests were they representing? Although each candidate proclaimed himself as a champion of the farmers, it was abundantly clear that each faction had different conceptions of who "the farmers" were. According to one Andani candidate, their elected members would use the Council as a basis to rally support for their "cause" and to promote the welfare of "farmers" in roughly the same way as the RGA.<sup>45</sup> After gaining effective control of the Council they would obtain grants or loans from the central government to provide farm inputs, especially machinery, for the local farmers. As my interviewee bluntly put it, control of the Council would reinforce the Andani power base in Tamale,

so that together with the RGA, the Regional Office and the Regional House of Chiefs, the Andanis "would act as a strong force, and the rice-farmers would gain in many ways as a result".<sup>46</sup> How specifically all farmers would gain from a politically biased Council in a situation where farmers, like the rest of the community, were neatly polarised between two rival factions, was not fully elaborated. According to this candidate, it was sufficient merely to "recognise" the problems, and help would be given "to those in greatest need".<sup>47</sup>

The WDDC was, of course, in a position to assist the farmers. Under the proposed system of decentralisation councillors were empowered to take major policy decisions which would be implemented by the DCE. Agriculture was certainly within its terms of reference, and the Council could liaise with the Ministry of Agriculture - indeed the two bodies were expected to work very closely on related matters - and secure better facilities for the farmers, especially the smaller ones. The extent to which this could be achieved in Dagbon, however, depended upon the "connections" of councillors.

As far as the candidates of the Adubulai faction were concerned, their planned strategy (predictably) was to use their "voice" on the Council to show that the Andani farmers had "taken everything from government for themselves, and that there was not one, but two sides in Dagbon".<sup>48</sup> Since the Andanis already exercised considerable power and influence over all local, state, government and "traditional" bodies, it was therefore crucial, according to these Abudulai supporters, for their side to win control of the WDDC if Andani power were to be restrained in Dagbon.<sup>49</sup> Thus it is clear that the big rice-farmers who contested the local Council elections in Dagbon were not primarily committed to promoting the interests of farmers as a class or group, but those of their own individual political group; every other consideration was of secondary importance.

The decision by prominent rice-farmers to participate in local government elections which, if they were to win, would need the support of small farmers who perceived themselves as belonging objectively to a different social category, seemed inconsistent and illogical. But this is a general problem, not only in Ghana, though perhaps especially acute there. An attempt to explain this phenomenon as related to Dagbon was given by Alhaji Iddrisu Kpabia, an Andani candidate, and a very big and successful rice-farmer indeed. According to him, although the Dagomba were "loosely separated into two chieftaincy groups", such division had not penetrated through all structures of Dagomba society, especially the small farmers.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, according to Kpabia, the small farmers as a collective group were not seriously represented at any level in Dagbon, and since they suffered from the same problems as all other farmers in the district, including rice-farmers, they were likely to support someone who had experienced their own problems and who understood their particular needs.<sup>51</sup> On such a basis, therefore, the big rice-farmer candidates were justified in presenting themselves as representatives, if not champions, of the small farmers.

Such mistaken view, however, were not shared by the vast majority of small farmers who insisted that these candidates did not represent the "general farming interest", but that of their own class or "type".<sup>52</sup> Besides, these small farmers were sceptical about the role of local councillors whom they charged with a reputation of "quarrelling among themselves over petty-petty things rather than serving the people".<sup>53</sup> Some of these further argued that local councillors merely served the interests of their sponsors, i.e., the regime, and that the proposed system of local government would be no more effective in dealing with the problems of the community. As one small farmer put it, "They [the

councillors] take their orders from Accra. What do the men in Accra know about our problems in Tamale here? What have they done about our water and electricity needs....Now these men [the local election candidates] are talking as if all of a sudden everything will be fine. Those of us who are experienced, we know better".<sup>54</sup>

The claim by the big rice-farmer candidates that they represented the interests of all farmers, including small farmers, was therefore unfounded. The small farmers' support for one candidate in preference over another was based mainly upon local political, i.e., chieftaincy, considerations, and the related patron-client system that was such an important characteristic of Dagomba society. We shall see later when we discuss the political attitudes of farmers during the 1979 general elections how precisely this mechanism worked.

The significance of the local elections to the big farmers is best illustrated by the results: out of sixteen elected WDDC councillors, 75 per cent were large rice-farmers, most of whom were either members or supporters of the Andani faction. (See Table 6.1, next page.) The Andani position on the newly-constituted Council was reinforced by the nomination of eight of their supporters (who were also large rice-farmers) to represent the traditional "interest", as follows:

1. Gulkpe-na, Abudulai Bukari I
2. Yo-Na, Yakubu Abudulai III
3. Kumbung-Na, Sumani Issah
4. Dakpema, Richard Alhassan Alhassan
5. Zobugu-Na, J.S. Kaleem
6. Sanerigu-Na, Andani Andan (Medical Superintendent of the Police Hospital, Accra)
7. Zanballon-Na, E.Y. Mahama (Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions)
8. Alhaji Ali Osman.

TABLE 6.1 : Elected WDDC Councillors (1978)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>WARD</u>	<u>GATE LOYALTY</u>	<u>PROFESSION</u>
O.S. Mahamadu	1	Andani	Rice-farmer
Alhaji Ibrahim Abudulai	2	Andani	Rice-farmer
Alhaji Iddrisu Kpabia (Madugu)	3	Andani	Rice-farmer
Alhaji Ibrahim Yahaya (Kukuo-Na)	4	Andani	Rice-farmer/ businessman
Alhaji Abukari Alhassan	5	Andani	Lecturer
Bruna Alhassan	6	Abudulai	Rice-farmer
Yakubu Sule	7	Andani	Teacher/ rice-farmer
Alhassan Yakubu	8	Andani	Teacher/ rice-farmer
Alhassan Salifu	9	Abudulai	Rice-farmer
Edmond Mahama Sheini	10	Abudulai	Teacher/ rice-farmer
Mahama Yamusah	11	Andani	Farmer
Mariayatu Damba	12	Andani	Public servant
Abudulai Davidson Kaleem	13	Andani	Teacher
Mahama Ibn Stephen	14	Andani	Priest
Mahama Tahiru	15	Abudulai	Rice-farmer
Mahama Abukari	16	Abudulai	Rice-farmer

Note: Mariayatu Damba, a princess from the Andani gate, was the only woman on the WDDC.

Alhaji Ali Osman was the only nominated candidate who was not a member of the Andani family; he was, however, a strong supporter. In effect, out of the twenty-four members constituting the WDDC, no less than nineteen (79 per cent) represented the Andani interest - a considerable position of strength indeed.

What was the relative importance of being both a large rice-farmer and an Andani supporter? We have already seen that as Andani supporters these farmers were politically well connected, and had very strong ties with various local institutions, such as the RGA. The control of the WDDC by their colleagues meant that the Andani big rice-farmers had won further allies in Dagbon to reinforce their strong economic, political and social position all round. One of the first measures proposed by the members of the Council for assisting local rice-farmers was the seeking of a special agricultural loan from the central government to purchase machinery which, according to the authorities, would be sold or hired to farmers "depending on their circumstances".<sup>55</sup> The Council also proposed to set up a Special Committee to collaborate with the various agricultural agencies in the district, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Economic Planning, Nasia Rice Company, DEMCO, and the Banks.<sup>56</sup> These proposals, however, were intended to facilitate the rice-farming activities of a specific and already privileged group of farmers - the Andani big rice-farmers and, to a much lesser extent, Andani supporters among the smaller farmers via the existing patron-clientelist system.

The enhancement of the Andani position through the patronage of the WDDC was, however, limited, for although the WDDC was given wider jurisdiction as a result of the government's policy of decentralisation, it did not have either the professional expertise or the financial

resources at its disposal to formulate and implement complex policies of the type required to carry out an agricultural development programme even at the district level. The most that had been achieved in this respect by November 1978 was a series of proposals by the Council, and a number of meetings with the different bodies with which the WDDC was expected to collaborate. As the DCE rightly pointed out, the tasks which these councillors initially set out to achieve "were far too complex and ambitious for the Council to handle".<sup>57</sup>

If, at first, the Andani councillors failed to translate their "ambitious" proposals into concrete policies, they did, however, succeed in using their position to secure economic benefits both for themselves and their clients on an individual level. One of the most prominent WDDC councillors, O.S. Mahamadu, admitted to using his position to obtain two combine harvesters from Nasia Rice Company for one of his friends who cultivated rice in Karaga. He also "hired" two lorries from the NRDC, ostensibly to convey Council property from Diari to Tamale, but in reality to carry paddy rice from Nasia to Bolgatanga for one of his brothers.<sup>58</sup> The Dakpema (a representative of the traditional "interest" on the Council) was also instrumental in securing the services of trucks from the Ministry of Agriculture to cart rice from Daboya to Tamale and other parts of the region for several of his clients.<sup>59</sup> It must be noted that only Andani councillors were involved in such transactions. The Abudulai members had their own supporters who were also in need of favours, but they were not strong enough politically to influence those in key positions, or challenge local favouritism.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to elucidate the relationship between chieftaincy and the big farming interests in the North. It was shown that the big rice-farmers supporting the ruling

Andani gate used their privileged position to secure benefits for themselves and their friends through the patron-client system in Dagbon. Thus chieftaincy connection was important to socio-economic mobility in the North. That position was made possible by the interference by the central government in local traditional affairs, and which chose to operate through chieftaincy-based allegiances that were still very strong and through which it was easier to win support for a cause (for example, Unigov) rather than via individuals. Support for a gate would bring with it support for all its followers on "traditional" grounds, whereas one would not hope to win over a majority in the area purely on the basis of the distribution of economic benefits, since these were insufficient to go round.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Unigov (Union Government) was a form of government proposed by Acheampong which was based on the principle of national consensus. It was designed specifically to exclude political parties, and participants would be chosen on the basis of their standing in the community. The concept of Unigov will be discussed fully in the next chapter.
2. Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama, Tamale, 6 June 1978.
3. Interview with Ziblim Andan, Tamale, 9 June 1978.
4. Interview with Baba Yakubu Abudulai, Tamale, 25 April 1978.
5. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Tamale, 24 June 1978.
6. Ibid.
7. As a state corporation, the NRDC was not permitted to hire out machinery to private clients, but the close connection between the influential farmers and the top officials facilitated the use of the Corporation's machinery and equipment.
8. Interview with Issah Mohamed, Tamale, 25 May 1978.
9. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Tamale, 24 June 1978.
10. Interview with Mr. A. Klubi, Deputy Manager, Barclays Bank, Tamale, 15 July 1978.
11. Interview with A. Boamah, Agricultural Consultant, Standard Bank, Tamale, 6 July 1978.
12. Ibid.
13. Abudulai supporters were in effect playing a waiting game since they believed that their gate would be restored to power as soon as a favourable situation, i.e., a change of government, occurred.
14. Interview with M. Opoku, Executive Director, DEMCO, Tamale, 5 July 1978.
15. Ibid.
16. Each one of the commercial banks in Tamale had its own Rice Growers' Association, which consisted of rice farmers among its customers. These Associations provided members with the usual facilities for obtaining farming inputs, including, of course, loans.

17. Interview with A. Klubi, 15 July 1978.
18. Interview with B.A. Yakubu at Wulshie Na's palace, Tamale, 26 July 1978.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Based on an initial interview with Abukari in Tamale, 21 April 1978.
22. Informal discussion with Janga elder, Janga, 4 May 1978.
23. The Nyankpalana, one of the longest serving chiefs in Dagbon (1945-1979), pointed out that this practice was not common in Dagbon, but a chief could retrieve land already allocated to a farmer if that land was not being put to "good" use, or if the farmer did not have the means to cultivate it. Interview with Nyankpalana at Nyankpala, 10 June 1978.
24. Interview with Airborne Force (ABF) officer, Tamale, 15 August 1978.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. According to this ABF officer, after he had gone through the preliminaries with the chief - offering of kola nuts, fees, and the pouring of libation - the chief expressed his gratitude for the way the government was helping his people, and hoped that he (the chief) would continue to receive the "blessing" of the regime.
28. Interview with S.Y. Imoru, RGA Executive Officer, Tamale, 30 June 1978.
29. Interview with Abukari, 30 April 1978.
30. This account is based on several informal interviews with the farmers involved, and with the former Gushiegu chief, B.A. Yakubu, during June 1978.
31. Interview with Seidu Harruna, Tamale, 30 June 1978.
32. Mahama claimed that he was a distant cousin of the Yo-Na, but that his support for Andani was based on this gate's association with prosperity in Dagbon. Interview at Tamale, 2 July 1978.
33. Alhassan claimed to be a nephew of former Yo-Na Abudulai Abudulai IV.

34. Dagbon was served by two district councils: the Eastern Dagomba District Council with offices in Yendi, and the Western Dagomba District Council based in Tamale.
35. Daily Graphic editorial, 14 October 1978.
36. The 1978 local government elections were the first to be held in Ghana since 1958, the period of CPP rule.
37. Originally, the Dagomba District Council consisted of eighteen elected members in addition to six others nominated by the Traditional State Council to represent its interests, and which included nominees from both gates.
38. It should be noted that the traditional members on the WDDC were nominated by the Northern Regional House of Chiefs, where the Andani influence was particularly strong, and not by the DCE.
39. Interview with Mr. Tetteh, DCE, Tamale, 1 August 1978.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. "Campaign" here refers to the government campaign to win support for Unigov. Although opposition was not officially banned, different tactics were used by the authorities to intimidate non-supporters and reduce opposition in the process.
43. Interview with Mr. Tandoh, Yendi, 24 August 1978.
44. Ibid.
45. Interview with O.S. Mahamadu (elected member for Tamale Ward 1), Tamale, 7 July 1978.
46. Ibid. It should be noted that the Regional Administration was not "controlled" by the Andanis in the true sense, but several of the top officials there were supporters.
47. Ibid.
48. Interview with Bruna Alhassan (elected member for Tamale Ward 6), Tamale, 4 July 1978.
49. Ibid.
50. Interview with Alhaji Iddrisu Kpabia, Tamale, 3 July 1978.
51. Ibid.

52. Similar views were expressed by several groups of small farmers, notably from Savelugu, Lamashegu and Gumbehene.
53. Ibid.
54. Interview with Adam Issah, Tamale, 15 August 1978.
55. DCE Files and interview, Tamale, 29 October 1978.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Interview with O.S. Mahamadu, 30 October 1978.
59. Informal discussion with Dakpema, Tamale, 30 November 1978.

CHAPTER 7THE POLITICS OF THE RGA

In the previous chapter we attempted a discussion of the relationship between chieftaincy and rice-farmers, and showed how the successful big rice-farmers in the North derived certain benefits through their connections with the ruling gate. The analysis will be carried further in this chapter and will focus on the political behaviour of these farmers, in particular the role that they played during the 1978 referendum on Union Government, or Unigov. We are concerned with showing that the big farmers' attitudes and behaviour during the referendum was directly influenced by the support which they received from the regime both as individuals and as a group, i.e., as privileged members of the RGA. The big farmers' relationship with the regime was clearly based on patron-clientelism. Besides gaining access to important government and farming agencies and banks, these farmers also had access to top political leaders through whom they received important favours such as loans and import licences. We have seen that patron-client relationships are a two-way process, with the patron offering economic aid and special favours in exchange for what has been described as "external support".<sup>1</sup>

While the influence of the rice-farming interests was of great importance for the question of support for, or opposition to the regime, the crux of the matter was the Andani/Abudulai conflict. This was embodied in the pattern of politics within the RGA. Thus we will attempt to show how, while the benefits gained by local institutions and groups, such as the RGA leadership, played an important part in the question of support for the government, this was in turn a reflection of the mediating role of chieftaincy in relation to national politics on the one hand, and to local mobility opportunities on the other.

### The Large Rice-farmers and the 1978 Referendum on Union Government

The 1978 referendum was held by the SMC supposedly in order that the people as a whole could decide on whether or not to accept the SMC's own proposal for a future form of government: Union Government. Before discussing the role of the large-scale rice-farmers in the Unigov campaign, however, it is necessary first to explain what was meant by the concept and how it was locally understood. On what ideological or rational grounds was it based? As presented by the Report on the Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government,<sup>2</sup> Unigov excluded political parties from participation in elections since they were alleged to have repeatedly failed the country and to have exacerbated communal and (tribal) decisions. Moreover, Union Government was intended to be sufficiently broad-based to include all sections of the community, including the Armed Forces and the Police.<sup>3</sup> According to government leaders, Unigov was a form of National Government, but one based less on the idea of "coalition" government of the type associated with war or national crisis, such as in Britain during the 1930s, than on the cultural heritage of the Ghanaian people - a heritage that was supposed to emphasise the sovereignty of the people and "community government".<sup>4</sup>

The rationale behind this newly-proposed form of government lay in the idea that the system of party politics had failed to provide stability for the country because it was based on a foreign model, namely the Westminster model of government. Besides, the two military coups that had brought down the Nkrumah and Busia governments respectively were presented as an indication that the military was bound to play a leading role in national politics. According to its proponents, the soldiers having participated in power-sharing would not be prepared to surrender the role and to return to barracks where they would be relegated to their

traditional function of defence and security. As Ghanaian citizens, members of the Armed Forces "had the right to want to take part from now on in the decision-making process".<sup>5</sup> A suitable compromise, therefore, was to incorporate the Armed Forces and Police into a national government in order to achieve stability in the country. Thus, Union Government was defined by the Report as being a form of government representative of the people and having as its philosophical foundation the concepts of "national unity and consensus". Representatives would be selected from all levels and sections of the community on a basis other than membership of an institutionalised political party or parties.<sup>6</sup>

As far as the majority of Ghanaians were concerned, and contrary to the government's propaganda, this was a novel political concept, and most people did not understand what it meant, or how precisely it was supposed to work. Even Ghanaian officials conceded that they did not fully understand the concept of Unigov, and that no constructive attempt had been made to elucidate it with any precision. Consequently, they were having great difficulty in presenting the government's position to the public.<sup>7</sup> The national press, acting as the mouthpiece of the regime, also experienced great difficulty in elucidating the concept. One weekly publication, for example, after failing to demystify the confusion surrounding the idea, could only appeal to the conscience of opponents to re-examine the whole issue since it was a fact "that any new concept for political development anywhere had never been clearly defined in the early stages".<sup>8</sup> It was not unusual, therefore - so it was argued - for proponents of such concepts to be misunderstood, and for their ideas to be rejected as impracticable even by well-meaning intellectuals.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding the vagueness of the concept, however, the SMC mounted an intense and extensive political campaign early in January 1978 with a view to winning majority support for the notion.

The majority of large-scale rice-farmers in the Northern Region had been supporters of the ruling Andani gate which, as we have already seen, firmly supported the SMC government of General Acheampong. Consequently, the referendum was overwhelmingly supported by large and well-connected rice-farmers, some of whom were active campaigners for Unigov. It was in the best interest of these farmers to advocate a "Yes" vote, since the newly-proposed form of government was clearly designed to preserve the dominance of the existing (military) government leaders and, more especially, the policies which had been responsible for the development of that group or "class" of farmers. The high and widespread level of corruption which the regime implicitly condoned was in fact beneficial to these farmers since the system tolerated their own corrupt activities. Thus the "kalabule" system which flourished under the military regime was therefore perfectly compatible with the aspirations of these farmers.

Two of the most active government supporters in the North during the Unigov campaign were Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, one of the principal beneficiaries of the Acheampong regime, and O.S. Mahamadu, a prince from the Andani gate and a rice-farmer of considerable achievement.<sup>10</sup> There were, of course, several other active pro-Unigov campaigners among the farmers, especially from within the executive of the RGA. Although the RGA was formed ostensibly to represent the interests of all rice-producers in the region, in effect it did not cater for the small-scale rice-farmer, and as we shall explain later in this chapter, it was completely dominated by a nucleus of well-connected and politically influential large-scale producers. It was from amongst these big farmers that the regime recruited its most fanatical supporters. Backed by substantial government resources, including finance and transport,<sup>11</sup> these government supporters launched one of the most intensive campaign programmes which spanned the entire Northern Region, but with special focus on Dagbon.

The pro-Unigov rice-farmers did not acknowledge any theoretical difficulty in defending the concept. Rather, according to them, it offered a real opportunity for the development of the North. As these supporters claimed, there would be no feuds between rival political groups under the proposed system, since all candidates would be chosen on personal merit based on their standing in the local community, and would be committed to work in the interest of the country as a whole. According to one such supporter, Unigov, as proposed by Acheampong, presented the North with its best opportunity for development since the Nkrumah days.<sup>12</sup> This was one of the main reasons, he claimed, why he was personally supporting the government on the issue. Furthermore, he argued, Unigov would bring stability to the Dagomba who had throughout their history been plagued by chieftaincy disputes. According to this interviewee, the intervention by politicians in Dagomba chieftaincy affairs was directly responsible for the division within the Dagomba people,

because each party that comes into power will try to install a chief who will control the people for that party...because the North is very important to the politicians in the South since if there is no unity between the North and the rest of the country, it could cause serious political problems. So that when parties are abolished and government is based on a common interest then there will be no more need to rely on chiefs for support. The chiefs will then return to their traditional role...With Unigov we the Northerners will start to concentrate on the development of the region. Since farming is our main business we will try to produce as much as we can in order to feed the people.<sup>13</sup>

Again, according to this interviewee (and his views were consistent with those of many of his counterparts), Unigov was supported by the farmers because it would first of all encourage economic development, and then unite the politically divided North. These sentiments, however,

did not reflect those of all farmers, but were rather typical of a specific group of rice-farmers - the big and privileged ones supported by the regime.

Such general political and economic rationalisations of the virtues of Unigov must obviously be taken with a pinch of salt. In most cases, more personal motives were at work in the shape of the several forms of reward and favours that had been granted to large-scale farmers. Alhaji Zakaria, for example, was prepared to acknowledge this when he explained that,

We campaigned for Unigov because we wanted the government to do for us all **that** we wanted. I made sure that all my villagers voted 'Yes' so that when they [the government] win we get what we ask for...The SMC government, I will say, have done very well since they have been able to satisfy us with all our needs. Not only the big farmers, but I would say the small farmers also, have received some gains from the SMC government.<sup>14</sup>

This opinion, however, was more consistent with the achievements of the big farmers who, as we have seen earlier, were the main beneficiaries of SMC favouritism. By comparison, the small farmers gained very little and were relegated to a state of dependence on their more privileged colleagues.

The big farmers often employed devious tactics to win support for their cause. They made vague promises to the villagers, such as the improvement of their living conditions or, more significantly, improving the supply of agricultural inputs to the farmers. Representations were often made to the village chiefs on behalf of the government. Thus, about the middle of February 1978, three top officials from the RGA - Abu Alidu (the Organiser), Alhaji Zakaria, and Ziblim Andan - approached the Nyankpala chief, the Nyankpalana, with their Unigov "package". According to them, they had come in an official capacity to inform the villagers that

the government had "taken notice" of the difficulties which they (the farmers) experienced by travelling to Tamale to obtain their commodity supplies. The RGA delegation pointed out that since the villagers were all very hard-working people and spent most of their time on their farms, it would save time and effort if a farmers' store was set up in the village. The chief was led into believing that all the details had been worked out by the Regional Office in Tamale, and that the plan would soon be implemented. His subjects were informed accordingly, and their optimism ran very high. This was undoubtedly a gesture which convinced the chief that the Acheampong regime was taking a "very serious interest" in the welfare of his people, and of Northerners as a whole. As a result, he instructed all his people to vote "Yes" at the referendum.<sup>15</sup> The village, of course, never got its store.

The making of promises to the Northerners was not confined to the "agents" of the government alone. During his meet-the-people tour in January 1978 when Acheampong was promoting Unigov as "the re-affirmation of the authentic African political values of united effort, individual loyalty and involvement of all in political decision-making"<sup>16</sup> (whatever that was supposed to mean), he did not miss out on the opportunity to inform supporters of the government's concern and dedication to their cause. At a durbar with the chiefs in Yendi, the Head of State promised that the remaining stretch of the Tamale-Yendi road, one of the most dilapidated trunk roads in the North, would be tarred with immediate effect.<sup>17</sup> As far as the Upper Region was concerned, Acheampong reportedly stated that 50 million cedis had been made available for the construction and tarring of 680 kilometres of roads there.<sup>18</sup> The question of road communication was of crucial importance to the North since the area was predominantly agricultural, and passable roads were vital for access to the urban markets.

### Membership and Support within the RGA

The RGA, which was established in 1973 to represent the interests of the rice-growers in the region, developed into one of the most effective wings of the government in the North during the late 1970s.<sup>19</sup> During the Unigov campaign, the association was instrumental in promoting the government cause and, as we have mentioned, its leaders were among the most active campaigners in the North, sometimes employing the use of force to discipline opponents.<sup>20</sup>

We have also mentioned that the RGA was pro-Andani and enjoyed strong political influence on the basis of the Andani association with, or control of, various institutions such as the WDDC (where, prior to 1978, councillors were nominated by government officials), the Regional House of Chiefs, or the Regional Administration where Andani influence was particularly strong. Before discussing the specific role played by the Association during the campaign (and its general support for the SMC) it will be necessary to make certain observations about it. The main questions to be answered are, first, "Who constituted the RGA?", and secondly, "Whose interests did it actually represent?" In other words, we must attempt to answer the question of whether Association was truly representative of its entire supposed membership.

Although the ability to take advantage of government policies and subsidies initially rested on good connections with the ruling dynasty of chiefs and government officials, by 1977/78 the most successful Dagomba farmers had established the RGA as a relatively independent basis of bargaining power and a nucleus of large-scale rice-farming interests. Membership was in theory open to all rice farmers, including the very small growers, but in practice these were not effectively represented by it. Indeed, they were not even members. A detailed discussion of the small

farmers' responses to the RGA will be given in the following chapter. Let us state for the moment that most of these farmers did not know of the Association, and even those who knew about it were not prepared to join since they perceived it as a big-farmers' club. (Of course, it was also in the interests of the organiser to keep these farmers ignorant of the objectives of the RGA.) As far as the small rice-farmers were concerned, it was those big and privileged counterparts who stood to gain from the benefits of membership. Thus they recognised how the whole system of subsidised rice production really worked.

The policies advocated by the RGA amounted to more of the same - i.e., pressure for more subsidised inputs, such as foreign exchange to buy tractors or combine harvesters - rather than policies which would have benefited the majority of small rice-farmers: for example, the replacement of subsidised inputs by much higher "official" prices. The lack of such a policy created a potential conflict between the underprivileged farmers on the one hand, and the big and well-connected on the other, and which nevertheless was moderated and "contained" by the patronage which some of the larger farmers extended to small farmers.

Our sample of large-scale rice farmers shows that not all such farmers were registered members of the Association by the middle of 1978. Only 72.9 per cent of those interviewed were members, as the table below indicates.

TABLE 7.1 : Large-scale Rice-farmers' Membership of the RGA 1978

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Members	51	72.9
Non-members	19	27.1
Total sample	70	100.0

Source: 1978 Survey of Large-Scale Rice-farmers, N/R).

Although a membership rate of over 70 per cent would appear to be high, the important point is the relationship between membership and the representative activities of the Association. A large number of members claimed that they were unhappy with the assistance they received from the RGA. In recent years the Association had not been able to help its members to obtain either fertiliser or mechanised farm services - this situation was actually due less to inertia on the part of the Association than to bad planning on the part of the government - and as a result had seen an increase in the ranks of its disgruntled members. At the same time the RGA witnessed an increase in the benefits (mainly in the form of machinery) that were allocated to certain top members, including the executive and a few privileged members, which led to the belief among some members that the RGA provided for only a nucleus of its membership - those members referred to by the rank and file as the "big" men. Such benefits encouraged strong criticism of the executive, both from within and from outside the Association. For example, one farmer from Savelugu (and a former member of the Association) expressed his disillusionment thus: "I do not find them [the Association] to be helpful. They help no one except themselves, and unless you belong to their company you are wasting your time. I soon realised that they were cheating the farmers....that's why I left".<sup>21</sup> This farmer himself cultivated three hundred acres of rice and owned two tractors which he had purchased some years previously with his own resources, as well as a combine harvester which he purchased with the help of a loan from Barclays Bank.

The theme of the "inner circle" within the RGA was one of the most exploited topics by outside critics and dissatisfied members alike. The general criticism was that the executive did not consult the membership on important issues, but instead discussed these among themselves. As a

result, only the leadership benefited from the policies of the Association. Some farmers claimed that they were deliberately and systematically excluded from important Association meetings. One such farmer, Abudulai Alidu, had been a member for four years and, according to him, had never been invited to a meeting. News of the meetings tended to reach him after they had actually taken place, and the explanation usually given was that the organisers could not contact all the members. As far as this member was concerned, it was a deliberate attempt on the part of the executive to keep certain outspoken members away from the meetings in order to save embarrassment to the "top people". Furthermore, according to Alidu, "It is rather unfortunate that they run this Association in the name of the farmers, when we all know who the real beneficiaries are".<sup>22</sup>

It is obvious, therefore, from comments of this sort that a conflict of attitudes existed within the general membership of the Association, and that its general policy was under constant attack. According to our survey, only 60.8 per cent of the members were satisfied with the policies of the RGA, while 39.2 per cent expressed dissatisfaction with such policies (Table 7.2, below).

TABLE 7.2 : RGA Members' Attitudes towards the Government, Unigov and the Association

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Satisfied with government help	33	64.7
Not satisfied with government help	18	33.5
Supporter of Unigov	35	68.6
Non-supporter of Unigov	16	31.4
Satisfied with policies of RGA	31	60.8
Not satisfied with policies of RGA	20	39.2

Total number of members in sample: 51

Source: 1978 Survey of Large-Scale Rice-Farmers, N/R

The table suggests that there was a strong correlation between the satisfaction derived from the policies of the RGA (60.8 per cent) and the help given by government to farmers in general (64.7 per cent). These statistics suggest further that members identified the Association's policies with the general agricultural policies of the government as far they related to the North. The RGA was therefore regarded as an agent, if not an embodiment, of government policy by the majority of its members. According to one of the leaders, the rice-farmers supported government policy because it was in their "best interest" to do so, and General Acheampong was very "co-operative and helpful" in assisting those farmers to get farm machinery, bank loans, and, in some cases, import licences. As far as he was concerned, the policies of the government were designed to help the farmers and the people in the North, so that all members of the Association were urged "to support government policy, especially those that relate directly to agriculture, since agriculture is our only means of developing the North....in the RGA we fully support the government, and we expect all our members to support it as well...."<sup>23</sup>

The actual influence which the RGA exerted over government agricultural policy could not have been that decisive or even significant if viewed from the national point of view; but in certain areas of policy, such as the pricing of paddy, the Association has acted as an effective pressure group in order to secure better prices for the farmers. When the RGA was first established in 1973, paddy was bought by the government rice-mills at 2 cedis for a 108 lb. bag, but with pressure from the Association, it increased at intervals to 12 cedis, 50 cedis, and 70 cedis per bag.<sup>24</sup> In December 1978, the Commissioner for Agriculture, Colonel S.M. Akwagyiram, announced after a meeting with the members of the RGA in Tamale that the government had agreed to raise the price of paddy to 90 cedis per bag

as a result of "strong representation" by the Association about the prevailing high cost of production.<sup>25</sup>

Although such policies relating to the price of paddy were beneficial to all rice producers, government pricing policies on the whole acted against the interests of most farmers for the main reason that subsidised inputs could be obtained only by some: those with connections, as we have already seen. Some of the less-privileged members gained something in return for supporting the leadership, generally in the form of the hire of farm machinery, supply of transport and other inputs. But these "gains" were petty by comparison with those realised by the leaders themselves. In any case, such benefits were not the direct result of government policy and depended upon the inclination of the farmer/owner, and in view of the catastrophically high prices paid by the recipient farmers, such "benefits" represented nothing but a net loss to these farmers.

Among the members, however, there were some who claimed to receive no assistance from the Association. Although these benefited of course from the regular increases in the price of paddy, such members did not receive assistance from the leading farmers because they did not belong to the same chieftaincy faction or, what amounted to the same thing, were not supporters of the government.

It will be noticed from Table 7.2 (above) that 31.4 per cent of the RGA members were non-supporters of Unigov, and 33.5 per cent were dissatisfied with the help received from the government, while 39.2 per cent were dissatisfied with the performance of the Association as a whole. Table 7.3 (below) suggests that the majority of these farmers were either supporters or members of the Abudulai faction.

TABLE 7.3 : Political Attitudes of non-Government Supporters based on Chieftaincy Affiliation Among RGA Members

	<u>Abudulai</u>	<u>Andani</u>	<u>Non-committed</u>	<u>Total</u>
Non-supporter of Unigov	14	-	2	16
Non-supporter of government farming policy	15	1	2	18
Dissatisfaction with RCA policies	18	-	2	20

Note: "Non-committed" were those farmers who insisted they had no gate loyalties; they were both "southerners"

Source: 1978 Sample Survey of Large-scale Rice-Farmers, N/R.

The only Andani supporter who disagreed with the farming policies of the government (and of the RGA) explained his attitude in terms of the failure of the Association to secure more fertiliser and tractor services for farmers in the more remote areas.<sup>26</sup> Members' support for the policies of the RGA depended upon a number of factors, such as their personal relationships with the leaders, but the most important single factor was chieftaincy allegiance.

#### Power, Influence and Control within the RGA

So far the analysis has been concerned with the question of the national-level political loyalties of Association members. We proceed to discuss the question of control within the RGA, and will attempt to show how the RGA was used to promote the interests of its leaders. We have seen from Table 7.2 that 60.8 per cent of the members in our sample were satisfied with the official policy of the RGA. These members were the main core of its support. It would be misleading, however, to assume that such members had any significant influence on the general policies of the RGA. Instead they supported those policies in return for assistance in one form or another which they received by virtue of their loyalty to the leaders. Such help extended to the whole range

of subsidised inputs and facilities. For example, during the 1978 season considerable panic was created among the rice-farmers in the North by the acute shortages of fuel caused mainly by the breakdown of tankers and the familiar lack of spares, but also by the general shortages throughout the country. This resulted in a drastic cut-back in the total area cultivated in the region. The loyal members of the RGA did not as a rule suffer the same degree of inconvenience as the rest, because they either obtained their supplies on the recommendation of its highly influential leaders, or were given limited supplies personally by those leaders who were generally able to secure adequate quantities. A story recounted by Yakubu Alhassan illustrates the influence which the leading members of the RGA could exert under difficult conditions. For a whole week during the fuel crisis Alhassan had been trying to purchase a supply of diesel oil from the local Mobil filling station. Both his tractors were parked on his farm about sixty miles from Tamale for lack of fuel. According to him, he paid the manager fifty cedis in bribes hoping that he would be given a supply of this fuel, but each time he called at the station he was told to return later. Eventually, according to Alhassan, he was told by the manager that the "big alhajis" (including some of the RGA leaders) were putting pressure on him for not selling larger quantities of oil to them, and had threatened to report him to the Regional Office for alleged anti-government sentiments. Thus, if Alhassan's story was correct, these farmers were prepared to use political blackmail in order to enhance or reinforce their position of economic privilege.<sup>27</sup> In the end, Alhassan was forced through sheer necessity to buy a drum of oil privately from one of these farmers for "more than three hundred cedis" - nearly four times its cost price.<sup>28</sup>

The leadership of the RGA consisted of members of the executive and a few other ordinary members possessed of especially influential political connections both locally and at the national level. The group's common interests gave rise to a strong social network and sense of solidarity between them, so strong in fact that at the height of their influence they could not be effectively challenged by outsiders. Their supremacy was reinforced by the fact that they were protected by key government officials at both the regional and national levels, and who, invariably, derived notable benefits, such as land acquisition and management of their farms, from their association with this group. Furthermore, the members of this privileged group were not merely large-scale farmers - indeed several were not genuine farmers - but rather men with substantial business or professional interests which placed them in an especially favourable position to cultivate a variety of economic and political connections. Thus Alhaji Sumani Zakaria was not just one of the biggest rice-farmers in the North, in itself a position worthy of very high social esteem, but had a thriving transport business with several lorries, passenger trucks and taxis. He was also a big property developer in the North with the largest "storeyed building" in Tamale. Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama, a farmer and cattle-rancher, was a legal practitioner with a very successful business in Tamale, and acted as legal adviser to the RGA. He was also the owner of an aviation charter business based in Accra. Alhaji Mahama was later to become a founder of the Social Democratic Front Party and its presidential candidate in the 1979 elections. Another prominent and very influential member of the executive committee was Alhaji Salifu Abdul-Rahamani. He was an agent for Japan Motors, a position which he used to help many of his colleagues to acquire tractors and other vehicles. He was also a transport owner, and by his own admission cultivated farms for

"one or two good friends in Accra".<sup>29</sup> He was believed to be responsible for cultivating one of Colonel Felli's farms in Karaga. Alhaji Yakubu was the RGA President. Although he had no other known business enterprises outside rice-farming, he held several influential positions, such as Chief Farmer for the Northern Region, and was also a former member of the Western Dagomba District Council. Other "de facto" members of the executive included traders, senior military and police officers and heads of public corporations. The executive head of the NRDC had a fleet of lorries, tractors and combine harvesters at his disposal, which he hired to colleagues and of course utilised for his own personal concerns. The director of Nasia Rice Company - a company set up in 1974 for the purpose of developing rice-farming in the region and financed mainly by the commercial banks - had control of a fleet of about fifteen serviceable combines in 1978, and a considerable number of tractors and implements, as well as lorries and other forms of transport. It was a well-known fact that the Company's machinery was used to farm for commissioners based in the South and for some privileged local farmers. As overall controller of the local operations of the Ministry of Agriculture, the regional director was in a highly favoured position to assist those close to him. The main beneficiaries were senior civil servants and military officers, most of whom abused their position by failing to pay for the services of machinery hired out to them.

One of the most notorious examples of a public official's favouritism towards colleagues involved the Director of the Cotton Development Board, who had at least two rice-farms of his own and which were cultivated with machinery belonging to the Board. He hired some of the Board's tractors to his close allies in the North, but he used its machinery to farm for several top commissioners, including the Chief of Defence Staff, the Border Guard Commander, the Regional Commissioner, and above all, the Head of State.

From time to time members of the "top brass" of the executive met privately to discuss matters of mutual interest. The subject of discussion at such meetings did not always relate to matters of general interest to members, such as the price of paddy, but were more specific to the needs of the individual farmers involved. Topics frequently discussed at these meetings included, for example, the procurement of import licences, or the purchase of fertiliser from sources outside the Northern Region. The latter was a regular subject of discussion among the farmers during the 1978 season because of the serious shortage at the Tamale Depot which forced them to look for alternative sources. During that season most of these farmers obtained their supplies from the southern depots: Andan from Koforidua, Abdul-Rahamani from Tema, Kpabia from Sunyani, while Zakaria obtained supplies from Ho and Koforidua.<sup>30</sup>

At a meeting held at Zakaria's home in Tamale in late April 1978, and attended by eleven of the most influential rice-farmers in Tamale, the question of land irrigation formed the major subject of discussion. According to my informant, all the farmers in attendance had farms in areas that were particularly suitable for irrigated farming. The meeting was also attended by the local representative of Japan Motors who was also a big rice-farmer. He assured the meeting that his company could arrange to bring in the necessary equipment once credit facilities were granted. As a result, the farmers agreed to send a delegation to Accra to put their case to the government, and in about the middle of May three of their representatives were despatched accordingly. These consisted of Alhaji Zakaria, Abu Alidu (the RGA Organiser) and S.Y. Imoru, a farmer with considerable influence in government circles in Accra, having been National Vice-President of the Special Marketing Unit. Subsequent discussions with the delegates suggested that they were well received

personally by Acheampong who promised that he would do everything possible to assist them.<sup>31</sup> In June these farmers were informed by the Office of the SMC that the Head of State had approved their request for help, and were requested to submit details of their specific requirements, including costs. According to Zakaria, the government would have granted an import licence to their group of farmers, as distinct from the Association, but before they could work out the details, Acheampong was suddenly removed from office.

Although the big farmers could be persuaded to talk about their relationship with top government officials and matters relating to farming in general, they were unwilling, understandably, to talk about their "clandestine" activities, such as smuggling or hoarding. One could nevertheless gain an insight into these activities if sufficient rapport and confidence could be established with people who were familiar with the activities of these farmers. One such informant with whom I became close was a younger brother of an executive member of the Association. Early in November 1978, my informant brought to my attention how the big farmers in Tamale "put their heads together and plan how to send their rice to Togo and Upper Volta".<sup>32</sup> According to him, his senior brother had "more than 200 bags" ready to despatch to Bawku in the north-east. His rice was being transported together with that of another prominent Tamale farmer, both of whom were later spotted at the lorry station making arrangements with the driver. The driver denied, however, that he was carrying rice, and when asked about the nature of his cargo claimed instead that he was taking a consignment of maize to Bawku!<sup>33</sup>

The smuggling of rice had been officially banned by the government, but the farmers were so well organised through their social and political networks that they continued to smuggle most of their produce across the

borders without any fear of incrimination. It was widely believed that the former Northern Regional Commissioner, Colonel Zumah, used his position to help his friends smuggle their rice across various border points in the North.<sup>34</sup> Border guards were simply not in a position to question the authority of a senior officer, especially the Regional Commissioner, and the smuggled goods could be cleared fairly quickly after the formal payment of a bribe at the checkpoint. Although the payment and acceptance of bribes had been common in Ghana since independence and even before, the kalabule system which prevailed in Ghana during the seventies involved government complicity in corruption and smuggling on a scale hitherto unequalled. Thus the well-planned and systematic organisation of the leading rice-farmers provided them with further opportunity to continue to exploit one of the central characteristics of the political system to further their own ends.

This system did not challenge the operations of such economically and politically powerful groups as the leading members of the rice-farming community in Northern Ghana - as long as they were pro-government and, in the local context, pro-Andani. In fact, the system encouraged them to collaborate in such rackets in return for their unqualified support.

In the last few pages we have attempted to show who the powerful rice-farmers of the RGA were, and how they co-ordinated their efforts in order to promote both their group and individual interests. We saw that most of their activities were external to the Association, i.e., conducted outside its jurisdiction, while at the same time the RGA was used as an extension and reinforcement of their power. How then did the top members maintain their position of power and influence within the Association in face of fairly strong opposition from the rank and file of the membership? The answer lies in the fact that the executive had come to regard their

Association as an "agent" of the national government, and saw themselves as being entrusted with carrying out government policy locally, so that any opposition to them would in fact be construed as opposition to the regime, and opponents were liable to be handed over to the authorities to be dealt with accordingly.<sup>35</sup>

By 1977/78, the "opposition" within the RGA was becoming increasingly restless and disenchanted with the performance of the leaders. There was a general shortage of farm machinery, especially combine harvesters; old tractors were breaking down and spare parts were unobtainable; at the same time there was a growing demand for transport to convey both workers and goods to farms situated several miles away, while the shortage of fuel, which was so acute during the 1978 farming season, added to the growing frustration of those farmers.<sup>36</sup> The Association could not live up to the expectations of the rank and file; there was simply not enough "aid" to go around, and whatever little was available went to the privileged members. The relative ease with which the executive and top members were obtaining supplies of inputs encouraged some of the less-privileged members to voice their protests at the unequal distribution of benefits accruing from membership and to withdraw, while others adopted a bitter and hostile attitude towards the executive. Alhassan Sulemana was one of those who was so frustrated with the performance of the leaders that he decided on a personal audience with an executive member to inform him of the growing discontent among the general membership, and of his own hopeless situation. During the 1977/78 harvesting season, Sulemana had not been able to hire a combine harvester in time, and his rice was rapidly drying up. The situation was becoming ever more serious as a result of the strong harmattan winds which had a desiccating effect on crops. His paddy field was therefore seriously exposed to the risk of bush fire. The executive member,

whose farm was situated near Sulemana's at Nabogo, promised either to hire his combine to him after completing his own harvesting, or to use his influence to obtain one for him from some other source. None of these promises materialised, and Sulemana had to wait until early January to start harvesting, by which time his rice had suffered from a serious loss of grain. Sulemana estimated that he would have harvested more than two thousand bags of paddy instead of the four hundred which he actually realised. From that moment, according to his own testimony, he was convinced that the Association was not performing in the best interests of its ordinary members. He never attended a meeting thereafter, and had lost all his "respect" for "those cheating men".<sup>37</sup>

Some dissatisfied members had already protested long before Sulemana. In January 1977, during one of the Association's meetings at the Cultural Centre in Tamale, some of the members made their grievances known and expressed their dissatisfaction with the general running of the RGA, going so far as to call for the resignation of the entire committee. According to one member, the executive felt very "uneasy and nervous" at the call for their resignation. It was the first time in the history of the Association that they had encountered such undisguised opposition to their leadership. As this member put it,

They knew themselves that they had let the members down. Someone asked them why it was that only a few received help when the Association was supposed to be helping everyone. The Chairman replied that they were doing their best to help all farmers, but that the general economic situation made it impossible to satisfy everyone's needs. We, the members, were not satisfied with that answer, and they, the executive, were accused of corruption and incompetence.<sup>38</sup>

The executive, however, was not prepared to accept such outright condemnation and retaliated swiftly by first accusing the discontented members of being factional and

ideological, and secondly, of being anti-government.<sup>39</sup> As a result, the dissident members were reported to the Regional Office for being "anti-government" and were warned by the Regional Commissioner that as members of the Association they were expected to follow and support the leadership, and if any member failed to do so he would be considered an enemy of the government and would pay the consequences. If the admonition from the authorities was effective in moderating overt opposition to the RGA leadership, it did not help to win over any support for its policies. On the contrary, non-supporters continued to express their opposition privately.<sup>40</sup>

By having identified itself with official government policy, the Association was in effect reinforcing its authority locally. By the time that the referendum was being held, its position as an official government supporter became more prominent as its leaders became actively engaged in "campaigning" for "Yes" votes.

#### The RGA, Chiefs, and Local Support for the Regime

Campaigners in the North adopted various strategies, including the use of violence, to win support for the regime. The most effective strategy, however, was the manipulation of the local chieftaincy, since it is widely accepted that Dagomba chiefs generally command the loyalty of their subjects on most issues; the pro-Unigov farmers of the RGA were quick to exploit this situation. Although the Andanis ruled in Dagbon, not all the divisional chiefdoms there were controlled by their candidates. For example, Tolon, under the Tolon Na (Yakubu Tali), and Savelugu, under the Yo Na (Regent) Alhassan, were strong Abudulai chiefdoms. In addition to these divisional chiefdoms there were several sub-chiefdoms (villages) that were controlled by Abudulai chiefs. Consequently, several chiefs

were "deskins" during the period immediately preceding the referendum.<sup>42</sup> The practice of deposing chiefs is not, strictly speaking, recognised by the Dagomba constitution but, as we have already indicated, from time to time politicians have intervened to have their clients installed. This practice had never been demonstrated better than by the intervention of the SMC in Dagomba politics during the period leading to the referendum. The regime was becoming increasingly uneasy about the growing opposition to Unigov in some Abudulai villages, most particularly those around Tolon, Savelugu, Karaga, and Gushiegu; it was important, therefore, to find some means of bringing these villages under the control of chiefs sympathetic to the regime. Furthermore, the dissident chiefs controlled areas in which some of the most productive rice-fields in the North were situated. It was likely, therefore, that the big and power rice-farmers would want these areas to come under their sphere of influence.

At a meeting held at the Regional Office in Tamale in early February 1978, and attended by at least five top officials from the RGA - Andan, Zakaria, Mahamadu, Abdul-Rahamani and Alidu - and (apparently) senior officials from the Regional House of Chiefs,<sup>43</sup> it was unanimously agreed that urgent steps were required to secure certain skins from Abudulai chiefs since, in the first place, these chiefs acted as a "hindrance" to Unigov, and secondly, they were reluctant to allocate sufficient land to Andani farmers. All the members present agreed that Savelugu was the prime target and that, with its proven history of factional violence, the Ya Na would be perfectly justified in "sacking" the incumbent chief. Tolon, on the other hand, was considered to be too "hot" to interfere with in view of the Tolon Na's influence in the North as a whole.

The meeting urged that the Ya-Na be advised to act quickly, since some of these village chiefs made it difficult for supporters of the

regime to conduct their "campaign". Urgent action was recommended on Savelugu in particular, because the Regent was regarded as being one of the most "unco-operative" chiefs in the North. Furthermore, it would not be difficult to remove him since he had not performed his father's funeral rites - an important precondition for accession to a skin in Dagbon.<sup>44</sup> Thus, while these farmers' leaders gave the impression that certain chiefs in Dagbon should be removed because they were anti-government, they were also motivated by another important consideration: access to fertile rice-lands in areas controlled by these chiefs.

The policy of replacing dissident chiefs by those loyal to the Ya-Na was, of course, not a new practice. In recent years it had been adopted by former Ya-Na Mahamadu Abudulai IV, who installed several Abudulai princes to key skins until his own removal from Yendi by Acheampong in 1974. One of Mahamadu's appointees, B.A. Yakubu, the former chief of Gushiegu (traditionally one of the most important chieftaincies in the whole of Dagbon), was in turn "deskinning" by Na Yakubu Andani in 1974, on the grounds that he was not constitutionally installed, since Mahamadu himself was deemed not to have been properly elected to Yendi.<sup>45</sup>

Soon after the installation of Na Yakubu Andani, a list of dissident chiefs who were required to pay homage to him was drawn up, failing which they would "lose their skins". A communiqué issued by the Office of the NRC to the Regional Commissioner, Tamale, recommended that the chiefs be allowed no more than five days to meet their obligations. That list included sixteen sub-chiefs from the Abudulai gate as follows:- Alidu Andani, Yelizoli Lana; Seidu Abukari, Lamashe Na; Salifu Yakubu, Nyol Na; Alhassan Abudulai Ziblim, Sang Lana; Abudulai Abudu, Gbungbalaga Lana; Alhassan Bukari Haruna, Bogindana; Alhaji Alhassan Sule, Gushie Na; Adam Sulemana, Zogu Lana; Issahaku Alhassan, Tugu Lana;

Ashietu Abudu, Kugulogu Lana; Samata Alhassan, Gundo Na; the others were Bo Na, Kutum Lana, Nakpanso Na, Nyankpalana, and Zinabu Alhassan (no specified skin) who had since died.<sup>46</sup>

The chiefs, however, paid homage to the Ya-Na and retained their skins, although some (such as Sang Lana) were later to be "de-skinned". Initially, this was no more than a threat and was intended to draw the chiefs' attention to the authority of the Ya-Na. The loyalty of the threatened chiefs to the Ya-Na nevertheless remained doubtful in many cases, whilst in some it was clearly non-existent and opposition between the two camps continued. By the time of the Unigov referendum the North was clearly divided between the two camps, with no group commanding reliably wider support than the other. The anti-Unigov contingent was very strong and, if the government were to win, it was therefore necessary to move against this political force. It was around this time that the government intensified its tactics of surveillance, coercion, and violence to suppress anti-Unigov elements in general and Abudulai supporters in particular. Several village chiefs were reportedly removed from their skins during the weeks immediately preceding the referendum, especially around Savelugu, Yendi, and Karaga.

The campaign to unite the country behind the government continued well after the results of the referendum were known. Despite the government's official "victory" there was still substantial opposition in the country, in particular from the professionals and students. In Dagbon the anti-Unigov lobby was far from being subdued, as groups and individuals refused to accept results which they regarded as having been manipulated and designed to perpetuate the regime and the corrupt political system associated with it. There were reported clashes in both Yendi and Savelugu between groups loyal to the regime and those

opposed to it. At a public dance in Savelugu on 9 April 1978, two groups clashed once again, with several people wounded on each side and a number of them detained by police.

As a result of the disquiet in several parts of the North immediately following the referendum, the government felt bound to step up strategies aimed at removing opposition. The policies adopted by local agents of the government in dealing with the anti-government elements must be seen in this context. The removal of the Regent of Savelugu in early July 1978, must also be construed within the framework of this broad strategy. It also, however, finally cleared the way for the appointment of a divisional chief who would be more sympathetic to the interests of the large rice-farmers.

When the Regent was appointed to the Savelugu skin in June 1976, following the death of his father, Yo Na Abudulai III, there was apparently no official objection to the appointment. By early 1978, however, when the country was seriously divided on the Unigov issue, Savelugu, like many other strong Abudulai constituencies in the North, adopted a strong anti-Unigov platform. During the campaign the District Chief Executive called upon the Regent requesting him to order his subjects to vote "Yes", but he was reluctant to obey this directive. According to the Regent, he believed that it was morally wrong to ask his people to vote "Yes" when he personally was not a supporter of Unigov; instead, he agreed that his people should be left to vote according to the dictates of their conscience.<sup>47</sup> A few days after the DCE's visit, a rally was held in Savelugu which was attended by some of the big rice-farmers from Tamale. The Regent was expected to attend in order to show solidarity but refused to do so because, according to him, he was not informed and, besides, to do so would have been a betrayal of his own position. His refusal to attend the rally was construed, therefore, as an expression of

opposition to the government, and from that moment he and his supporters were subjected to persistent harassment and violent attacks by government supporters.<sup>48</sup>

Soon after the results were known and Savelugu was found to have voted "No" (although most of the surrounding villages voted "Yes"), the Regent was forcibly ejected from his official residence. According to him, the DCE came to his palace accompanied by the army and police and informed him that he was not longer the "rightful" chief, and was therefore ordered to quit immediately. As he said, he was not in a position to resist (and indeed offered no resistance) because he felt that the government was powerful and, in his opinion, "second only to God"<sup>49</sup> - in its power of course, not in its moral authority! However, the official reason given for the deposing of the Regent was that he had failed to perform the funeral rites of his late father, thereby presenting it as a non-political decision.<sup>50</sup> The Regent counteracted this claim by stating that, in the North, the funeral of a dead chief can be performed at any time, "even one thousand years later".<sup>51</sup> The real reason, according to him, why the funeral of his late father had not been performed was because he was not able to produce sufficient food from his farm to meet the demands of such a big occasion.<sup>52</sup>

In any case, the authorities had successfully removed a dissident from a very important chiefdom. He was succeeded by the Andani candidate, Yakubu Abudulai, former chief of Zangballon, a village situated only a few miles from Savelugu. The enskinment of the new Yo Na witnessed several minor conflicts between the two factions in the Savelugu district. By mid-July 1978 several sub-chiefs from the Savelugu district were in the process of being "de-skinned" by the newly-installed Yo Na. The act that evoked the greatest passion was the "de-skinment" of Botingli Na, Adam, who

had occupied that skin for about two years. His occupation of the Botingli skin was terminated on the grounds that he had been (wrongly) installed by the ex-Regent who was also deemed to have occupied the Savelugu skins unconstitutionally. Adam was not prepared to surrender, especially as he had built the official palace with his own resources. He claimed to have the support of twelve of the fourteen households in the village, and was prepared to face the newly-appointed candidate with his local "army". The Yo Na, on the other hand, would not allow his authority to be challenged, and was about to despatch his own warriors, armed with spears, bows, arrows, and other weapons to Botingli (about three miles from Savelugu), when the timely intervention of the police prevented what would otherwise certainly have been a bloody confrontation between two loyal "armies"<sup>53</sup>

The replacement of Abudulai chiefs by Andanis was therefore one of the most effective tactical manoeuvres deployed by the authorities in their attempt to win support for the SMC government. While the RGA leaders attempted to give the impression of neutrality as far as these matters were concerned - after all, skin politics was one of the most delicate issues in Dagbon - they were in fact very instrumental in having their own candidates appointed to the more important skins. Their patronage was also well directed. During the fertiliser shortage of 1978, articulated lorries from Tamale carted several hundred bags to the farmers in the Savelugu district. Improved tractor services, even if by no means adequate to meet all farmers' needs, were also provided in Savelugu during that season. One rice-farmer who did not himself own any farm machinery had no doubt that the installation of the new Yo Na was directly responsible for the generous assistance given to local farmers. His arguments are worth noting:

"Since the referendum we have had a change of chiefs in Savelugu and in some of the surrounding villages. Now the chiefs co-operate better with the authorities, and there is no misunderstanding as far as the distribution of fertiliser is concerned. The Germans (GGADP) bring fertiliser to the villages and the farmers are informed.... Since the new chief was installed I have seen that the government is taking a greater interest in the farmers. Last year, for example, I could only plough 100 acres of my rice-field, but this year I cultivated over 200 acres with the help of some farmers from Tamale, and I would have been able to farm more if it was not for the shortage of fuel which restricted the use of tractors. The reason why the big farmers are taking an interest in us here in Savelugu is because we supported Unigov. Our chief is doing his best to get help for us. He is well known in Tamale, and some of the big men come here every Friday to greet him".<sup>54</sup>

Such sentiments reflected those held more generally by farmers in Savelugu who supported the Yo Na, and it was clearly their opinion that the increased help which they received from leaders of the RGA was a direct consequence of their support for the regime.

But why did the influential RGA farmers have to support local farmers by providing them with various farming inputs when these farmers' support had already been won through the installation of sympathetic chiefs? The answer is not straightforward, but political considerations were certainly involved. Those members of the Association who did not receive adequate assistance were those supporting the Abudulai side. Conversely, those farmers in Savelugu who received increased assistance after the referendum were generally supporters of the Andani faction. Further, the Savelugu district was a very rich farming area with out-districts constituting vast areas of virgin land - areas that would, no doubt, be sought after by the prominent farmers. The stepping-up of assistance to the local farmers therefore had the important effect of reducing possible opposition to the big farmers' "invasion" of the village lands. This policy was adopted in most areas with productive rice lands which were

controlled by Andani chiefs, such as Karaga, Gushiegu, Janga, Mion, Tampion and Nanton. In each of these villages subsidised inputs were regularly supplied to local farmers. The rationalisation of this policy was best summed up by the RGA organiser: "We the big farmers, we need the villagers...we need their co-operation. If they don't like us they can destroy our farms...therefore we must try to assist them by giving some fertiliser, ploughing for them, and helping with carting their foodstuffs. It is the policy of the Association to help all farmers, not only those registered with us, but those in faraway areas..."<sup>55</sup>

One important qualification however should be made: help was only offered so long as those areas supported the regime, and were rich in farming-land.

#### RGA Leaders' Relationship to Acheampong in the post-Referendum Period

How successful were the big rice-farmers in winning support for the regime in the North during the referendum? Official results suggested that there was overwhelming support for Unigov among Northerners. According to the statistics, the government (i.e., "Yes") won every constituency there. The strongest opposition was met in the Abudulai stronghold of Tolon where 43 per cent voted "No". In Yendi and Savelugu, traditionally two very strong Abudulai constituencies, only 41.6 per cent and 27.9 per cent respectively voted "No" (see Table 7.4 below). Such statistics, however, are misleading, and do not reflect the extent of the unpopularity of the Union Government concept. One explanation for the government's victory in the North lay in the failure of many people to vote. According to the Electoral Commissioner's office there were 412,196 registered voters in the Northern Region, of which only 191,616 or 46.5 per cent voted. One of the chief reasons for the low turn-out was the anticipation by a large number of anti-Unigov supporters

TABLE 7.4 : 1978 Referendum Results - Northern Region

<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Number of Registered Voters</u>
Tamale	16,043	8,098	57,124
Tolon	6,926	5,210	24,731
Walewale	6,882	2,624	24,049
Nalerigu	12,110	1,797	26,290
Bunkpurugu	11,040	1,570	22,321
Nanumba	15,683	3,588	42,493
Gushiegu	8,342	3,590	25,603
Savelugu	6,640	2,566	19,892
Mion-Nanton	7,326	2,788	17,257
Chereponi-Saboba	9,956	2,035	21,324
Yendi	8,302	5,903	35,785
Gonja-West	9,653	3,400	36,561
Gonja-Central	13,379	3,895	32,786
Gonja-East	10,862	1,488	25,980
Total Northern Region	143,144	48,552	412,196
Total Ghana	1,303,376	851,238	8,793,197

Source: Adapted from The Mirror, 7 April 1978.

that the results would be rigged anyway, making it pointless for them to vote. Many potential "No" voters also abstained because of the fear of intimidation by government supporters, while many others, especially from remote villages, were deliberately misled as to the actual date of the referendum. Such tactics were clearly designed to reduce the impact of opposition in areas that were positively anti-Unigov.

Some observers have also questioned the reliability of the Electoral Register (and the apparent low turn-out). Jeffries, for example, has argued that the 1978 Register was grossly inflated, and that was largely due to a form of multi-registration encouraged by the government in which registration officers were paid according to the number of voters that were registered before the referendum. This system, he argued, was suspect, and might have been adopted "in anticipation of the attempt to rig the referendum".<sup>56</sup> This assertion was reinforced by some observers in the North who believed that the disproportionate distribution of "Yes" to "No" votes in the very strong Abudulai centres, suggested that either Abudulai supporters were under-registered, or the Register was "filled with non-existent Andani (and pro-Unigov) voters".<sup>57</sup>

As far as the Unigov campaigners amongst the big rice-farmers were concerned, the results (in which they played such a crucial part locally) represented a "great victory" for the government. The adopted position of these leading farmers as local agents of the regime was considerably enhanced during the period between the referendum and the removal of Acheampong in July 1978, when the regime became increasingly uneasy as a result of renewed opposition to Unigov from students, intellectuals, and professionals who had challenged the validity of the referendum results. An intensified national campaign was organised to suppress this opposition, and the RGA leaders were among those actively engaged in stamping it out locally.

Several of these leaders were rewarded individually for their loyalty to the regime. By July 1978, many of these had already been granted, or were about to receive, import licences. Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, for example, had been in receipt of one such import licence in January 1978, which was used to purchase several tractors abroad.<sup>58</sup> Within a few days of the referendum the Organiser of the RGA was also granted an import licence for the specific purpose of purchasing four combine harvesters.<sup>59</sup> The RGA itself was awarded a licence which the leaders regarded as an important breakthrough for the Association, and a "fair reward for the support given to the government during the campaign".<sup>60</sup>

The award of the import licence to the RGA gave rise to an internal dispute among its top officials over its utilisation, and in the process revealed that the executive, although united by factional and political considerations, did in fact hold differences in approach as far as some aspects of policy were concerned. It was split into two groups over this issue. The first group, represented by Alhaji Yakubu, the Chairman, and Abu Alidu, the Organiser, opted for the licence to be used to purchase farm machinery and spares which would be sold to members at government-controlled prices. This group also proposed the setting-up of a Farmers' Services company by the Association which would be responsible for advising farmers on various technical aspects, as well as providing maintenance of machinery. It was envisaged that this scheme would have been launched by the end of 1978.<sup>61</sup>

On the other hand, the second group consisting of Alhaji Zakaria, Alhaji Abdul-Rahamani and Imoru, argued for the formation of a trading company by the Association for the sole purpose of importing machinery and spares to sell directly to members. They claimed that the rival proposals were too ambitious and would involve the Association in

unnecessary expense. According to Zakaria, this group's chief spokesman, if that proposal were accepted, the licence would have been utilised by a private firm on behalf of the RGA, and would have been particularly costly since it would have involved middlemen who in the main would be recruited from amongst the big rice-farmers seeking to make a quick profit.<sup>62</sup> By July 1978 (when Acheampong was removed from office), however, the RGA had not as yet received the corresponding Letter of Credit from the Bank of Ghana.

The differences between the two groups as regards this issue did not represent any major or developing ideological rift within the leadership, nor did it affect or influence its relationship with individual members. It was a purely internal matter based on differences of approach rather than general policy. The leaders were only too aware of the need to pull together for their benefit as a group. As Zakaria conceded, he was sure that a compromise would have been reached before final arrangements were made.<sup>63</sup> Zakaria was, of course, the most influential of the RGA leaders, and was generally regarded among Northerners (including the big rice-farmers) as Acheampong's chief local ambassador. It was not a reputation to be placed in jeopardy. This eminently sensible and powerful personality was always aware of the need for unity among the leaders, and was therefore never prepared to sacrifice such an ideal for personal gains. As he explained:

We the members of the Association have to be loyal to the government. We must put our heads together and work to make the Association successful. As for me, I would not pull one way when the Association was pulling in another way, because for me that would be a sign of weakness. All of us big farmers here know what the Association means to us. If I gain something, my friends gain too. So I would say it is better to forget about small differences.<sup>64</sup>

The importance of the RGA to its leadership is well illustrated by the above sentiments. Its leaders were united, and co-operated fully in activities relating both to farming and other business in general. Their cohesiveness as a group was made all the more easy by virtue of their membership of, or support for, the ruling chieftaincy gate.

We have seen in this chapter that the support by the Acheampong regime for the Andani gate and the reliance by the regime in turn for support by that gate, meant that a strong and mutual relationship developed between the two sides. The regime gave considerable economic benefits to its local supporters. Those amongst the big rice-farmers who supported the ruling gate were therefore well endowed to reap benefits. Furthermore, the leadership of the RGA which was Andani-controlled, developed into a powerful nucleus of Acheampong support, while by 1977/78 the Association itself became a political wing of the SMC. These leaders, who were also prominent pro-Unigov activists, received huge personal benefits from Acheampong in addition to the various forms of assistance they already received through political connections both locally and nationally. Supporters of the Andani/Acheampong alliance within or outside the RGA benefited from these arrangements through local patron-client networks. Non-supporters were of course, generally excluded from the aid-giving process. These consisted mainly of Abudulai supporters among the members of the Association. There was, however, another very important group of farmers who, as a group, were denied assistance: the small-scale rice-farmers. These were not admitted to the RGA, as we have seen, thus being deprived of any further assistance with their farming activities. Such policies by the authorities led to very specific responses on the part of the small-scale rice-farmers, which we will attempt to examine in the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. A Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties", in Comparative Studies in History and Society, No.10, July 1978.
2. Report on the Ad Hoc Committee on Union Government, abridged version, Republic of Ghana, 1978, para.5.
3. Many groups were sceptical about this ideal. Most opponents of Union Government argued that even though candidates were nominated on a "neutral" basis, there was nothing to stop them, after being elected, from forming "interest groups" in Parliament. They feared that the electorate would be represented by members whose adopted policies it did not necessarily endorse, and as a result could be alienated from their representation.
4. Report on the Ad Hoc Committee, op.cit., para.14.
5. Ibid., para.14.
6. Ibid.
7. Informal discussion with Mr. Nti, Ghanaian representative at ECOWAS, Accra, 1 January 1978.
8. Editorial, Weekly Spectator, 26 January 1978.
9. Ibid.
10. Mahamadu was subsequently elected MP for Mion-Nanton in the 1979 parliamentary elections.
11. Several of the official Unigov campaigners were given funds and vehicles for the campaign, but most of these vehicles were used for other purposes, mainly for passenger or other forms of commercial transport in addition to their officially designated purposes.
12. Interview with Alhaji Abdul-Rahamani, Tamale, 20 January 1978.
13. Ibid.
14. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Tamale, 24 June 1978.
15. Interview with Nyankpalana, at Nyankpala, 26 April 1978.
16. Daily Graphic, 2 January 1978.
17. The road between Yendi and Tamale stretches over sixty miles, of which only about ten miles on either end was tarred. According to Alhaji Shani Mahama, elected member for Yendi in Busia's government, the Progress Party (in which he served as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture) had plans to tar the entire stretch of road, but the Acheampong coup of 1972 disrupted their programme soon after work had begun. Interview with Shani Mahama, Yendi, 17 July 1978.

35. It was common practice for known opponents of the regime to be arrested and punished by the military. One such victim was Yahaya Ahmed who was known for his anti-Unigov sentiments, and was arrested by soldiers in April 1978 for allegedly instigating workers at the Tamale Fertiliser Depot to stage a "protest" for better pay. Ahmed was taken to Kamina Barracks on the outskirts of Tamale where, according to him, he was drilled "proper".
36. The problem of shortages was part of the national economic crisis, and not merely a characteristic of the North. It reached its peak towards the end of 1978, and affected the North more than other parts of the country because of its remoteness from the more developed South.
37. Interview with Alhassan Sulemana, Tamale, 16 August 1979.
38. Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Abudulai, Tamale, 10 September 1978. In a subsequent informal discussion with the Organiser he assured me that those who called for their resignation at that meeting were motivated by "petty jealousies", and were "trying to spread confusion" among members. He claimed that these were mainly "Abudulai people". Alidu, 21 September 1978.
39. Ibid.
40. Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Abudulai, Tamale, 10 September 1978. These incidents were verified by cross-checking with members of the executive, although the interpretation, naturally, varied.
41. Such tactics included the use of force - army and police - to intimidate groups or individuals who were known opponents of Unigov.
42. Certain Abudulai chiefs, however, could not be deposed of conveniently, such as the Tolon Na who was one of the most powerful and secure divisional chiefs in Dagbon. He was also a very influential politician who became Chairman of the PFP and presidential running-mate in the 1979 elections.
43. My initial informant, an employee at the Regional House of Chiefs in Tamale, intimated that two high-ranking officials from this institution - the Secretary and Assistant Secretary - attended that meeting, while one of the farmers present confirmed that another top official from the Regional Office was also in attendance.
44. This account was given by one of the farmers who attended the meeting but wished to remain anonymous in view of the "delicate politics involved". Interview, Tamale, 10 April 1978.
45. According to the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Yendi Skin Affair, 1972 (the Ollenu Report), which was set up to investigate the constitutionality of the enskinment of Mahamadu Abudulai IV to the Ya-Naship, his election was a violation of the customs and constitution of the Dagomba state in so far as it violated the customary procedure of selection by soothsaying, as well as usurping the powers of the traditional kingmakers among other things. Ollenu Report, p.127.

18. Daily Graphic, op.cit.
19. The main objective of the Association is given as aiming to seek the welfare of the rice farmer and to promote increased rice production in the Northern Region and in the country as a whole. Northern Rice Growers' Association: By-Laws and Articles of the Association, RGA, Tamale (undated).
20. At a pro-Unigov meeting held in Savelugu around the middle of February 1978, the speaker, S.Y. Imoru of the RGA, was heckled persistently by non-supporters, as a result of which about ten of the hecklers were ejected by the police with the help of vigilantes. They were locked up and beaten for "disturbing the meeting". This action resulted that evening in a major confrontation between local supporters of the two chieftaincy sides, with several dozens of people injured. Account given by Iddrisu Salifu, subpostmaster of Savelugu, 20 February 1978. This account was verified by senior staff at the Savelugu Police Station.
21. Interview with Iddrisu Fuseini, Savelugu, 30 June 1978.
22. Interview with Abudulai Alidu, Tamale, 26 April 1978.
23. Interview with S.Y. Imoru, RGA executive member, Tamale, 26 April 1978.
24. Personal Files, P.K. Dwumfuoh, former RGA Secretary, 28 April 1978.
25. Ghanaian Times, 21 December 1978.
26. Musah Ibrahim farmed at Diari, off the Bolgatanga Road. In 1977 and 1978 he was forced to reduce his acreage to a mere hundred acres (out of a total of 350) due to the shortage of machinery in the region.
27. Officials could not verify this particular incident, but one did admit that several of the big farmers paid large amounts in bribes in order to get extra supplies of engine oil, and became very arrogant and abusive if their requirements could not be met in full.
28. Informal discussion with Yakubu Alhassan, Tamale, 27 June 1978.
29. Interview with Salifu Abdul-Rahamani, Tamale, 25 April 1978.
30. Various interviews with Zakaria and Abdul-Rahamani.
31. The matter was discussed in interviews with all three candidates, whose individual accounts corresponded very closely.
32. Informal discussion with Seidu, Tamale, 1 November 1978.
33. Observation at Bolga Station, Tamale, 3 November 1978.
34. This view was supported by the findings of Zakaria Alhassan, a researcher from Navrongo in the Upper Region, who conducted a study on small farmers in the North, during 1978.

46. Circular letter from Registrar, Northern Regional House of Chiefs, Tamale, dated 26 June 1975. Shanni Mahama, Personal Files.
47. Interview with ex-Regent, Savelugu, 30 June 1978.
48. Ibid
49. Ibid.
50. This was the claim made by the District Chief Executive, Tamale. The Assistant Registrar, NRHC, argued, on the other hand, that it was nothing but a "vicious political act". Interviews, 13 July 1978 and 22 July 1989, respectively.
51. Interview with ex-Regent, Savelugu, 30 June 1978.
52. Because of his status, the performance of the funeral rites of a Yo-Na would involve several days of ritual and celebration attended by a large number of dignitaries and hundreds of people. A great deal of food and drink would therefore be required to provide for this very important occasion.
53. Interview with Salifu Mustapha, Secretary to Yo-Na, Savelugu, 7 August 1978.
54. Interview with Mustapha Yahaya, Savelugu, 7 August 1978.
55. Interview with RGA Organiser, Tamale, 11 May 1978.
56. R. Jeffries, "The Ghanaian Elections of 1979", African Affairs, Vol.79, No.316, July 1980.
57. Informal interview with K. Dadzie-Mensah, Tamale, 5 April 1978.
58. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Tamale, 24 June 1978.
59. Interview with Alidu, Tamale, 14 August 1978.
60. Informal interview with S.Y. Imoru, Tamale, 1 June 1978.
61. RGA Organiser, Personal Files, 29 April 1978.
62. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Tamale, 24 June 1978.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.

CHAPTER 8SMALL RICE FARMERS' ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSES INCLUDING CO-OPS AND THE SMU

The system of distribution of subsidised farming inputs which favoured the prominent rice farmers in the North was responsible to a large extent for the various types of responses amongst the small producers. Several reasons were advanced by local aid administrators for the lack of help given to these farmers, most especially with bank loans. These farmers were generally considered a liability since they could not comply with the banks' loan repayment policies. They were also considered to be inefficient rice producers. The small rice farmers of course did not accept the validity of such considerations. The point, however, was that they were the victims of a social system in which personal attributes such as status was heavily emphasised, and as a result they were in no position to compete with, or even challenge, their more privileged counterparts.

Originally, it was part of the government's 'official' policy to give assistance to small holders through established local agencies. Some help was administered, especially by the ADB during the period up to 1974/75, but that was selective and minimal. But with the intensification of large-scale rice farming from about 1974/75 small rice farmers found it much more difficult to obtain inputs, and by 1978 the situation had become intolerable with acute shortages of all types of inputs. By that time, however, government policies as regards small rice farmers had become official rhetoric and were inherently designed as Bates has argued, to benefit only the well-connected farmers and the administrators of the programme of subsidies.<sup>1</sup> We have seen how the RGA leaders benefitted from such connections. This situation increased the fears of the small farmers and led to specific responses from them. We will first consider the rationalisations which influenced such responses.

### Discontent Among the Small Rice Farmers

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the small rice farmers endured very serious setbacks in their farming operations as a result of the government's agricultural policies. Of course many of these recognised how the whole system of subsidised rice production really worked. According to them, the situation in the North which finally resulted in the neglect of the small farmer was not an accidental process. Some argued that from the outset there was a silent conspiracy between the big farmers and the institutions concerned to stop them (the small farmers) from participating in commercial rice farming but, they pointed out, this strategy became more obvious as resources became more scarce. Large-scale rice farming therefore remained the prerogative of the privileged farmers - businessmen, public servants, professionals, politicians and military officers - who in the main did not possess the technical know-how to utilize the available resources. According to the organiser of a small farmers' co-operative, the NBB,<sup>2</sup> even if the government had any intention of helping small farmers, its programme was stalled because of the "greed and selfishness" of those big farmers who were encouraged by the profitability of rice in the early days.<sup>3</sup> The latter were afraid of the challenge from those small farmers who were the traditional food producers in the North (and by implication better farmers), and as a result set out to monopolise the institutions by "dashing big money" to officials in order to gain favours. According to my interviewee, such farmers had penetrated through all local institutions connected with rice farming - the Ministry of Agriculture, Nasia Rice Company, NRDC, DEMCO, and of course the banks. At the same time these big farmers were enjoying the protection of the law by "befriending the local military officers" and those in power in Accra "who made it possible for them to smuggle rice across the borders".<sup>4</sup> There was no way, therefore, the small

rice farmers could successfully compete with their bigger counterparts. Again, according to this farmer, the process of excluding small farmers was complete when the commissioners started to get involved in rice farming and entrusted the running of their farms to their big-farmer associates while on business in Accra.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the big farmers "kept company" together in the RGA where they shared the accrued benefits. In the end, what should have been a programme for the development of the whole region and the benefit of all its people had in effect become the private monopoly of a few men who were not competent farmers, but who participated because of their accessibility to inputs, and the profitability of rice farming given such subsidised inputs.<sup>6</sup>

The small farmers' resentment was further reinforced by the prevailing view among the big farmers that these should be confined to traditional food crop production for which they were better suited, while rice production, which was more cost intensive, should be left to the large farmers. Such views were confirmed by the expressed attitudes of big farmers themselves (See Table 8.1).

TABLE 8.1: Big Rice Farmers' Expressed Attitudes towards Small Farmers in Terms of Selection of Crops

<u>Small Farmers' Expected Crop Selection</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
All other food crops except rice	58	82.9
Other foodcrops including rice	9	12.8
Rice only	3	4.3
	—	—
Total	70	100
	—	—

Source: 1978 Survey of Large Scale Rice Farmers N/R

According to this Table, the vast majority of big rice farmers (82.9 per cent) were in favour of small farmers concentrating on traditional food crops of which they were regarded as being most efficient.<sup>7</sup>

Economic arguments were also advanced. Some of these claimed that the grave shortages of farm inputs and the resulting high level of competition for such inputs was likely to affect the small farmer much more than others, while others maintained that the participation of these small farmers in commercial rice production was a "waste of everybody's time and resources".<sup>8</sup>

The small rice farmers rejected such claims which they regarded as 'excuses' given to justify the unfair advantages which those big rice farmers enjoyed. Ibrahim Alhassan, a small rice farmer, was not convinced by such "petty-petty talks", since his experience and those of his colleagues did not seem to add credibility to such judgments on the part of the big rice farmers. He argued thus:

When they say we have no experience in rice farming, we would like to turn back and ask them how much they themselves have got. I for one started cultivating rice since I started farming with my father at Taha, more than twenty-five years ago, and have had my own farm since fifteen years ... It's the same with all the farmers here ... they all started by cultivating rice small ... and now that there is profit in rice farming they (the big farmers) have suddenly realised that we the small farmers do not have the necessary experience.<sup>9</sup>

The argument was taken further by one of the organisers of the Lamashegu small rice farmers' co-operative who rejected totally the claim that small farmers wasted time and money:

Whose money is being wasted? How many of us small farmers get loans from banks or tractors from Agric (Ministry of Agriculture)? They (the big farmers) rather are the ones who waste money. In the past two years I have been forced to hire tractors from private people because the Agric. people said there were none available. And I could obtain not even one bag of fertilizer at the depot (Ministry of Agriculture Fertilizer Depot, Tamale). As far as I am concerned, the small farmer is not inefficient. If they give us the help that we ask, I know for sure that we will produce rice on a profitable basis, because we are better farmers.<sup>10</sup>

This small farmer maintained that it was the "deliberate intention" of those people (the big farmers and the administrators of subsidised inputs) to keep the small farmers' progress in check because of their "fear of competition" from the small farmers. His argument was advanced further:

They do hold us back because that is the only way that they themselves can make their gains. ... We are told that rice is subsidised so we must sell to the Government Rice Mills. That's unfair because we buy a bag of fertilizer from private sources sometimes for 15 cedis or more, and pay sometimes more than 90 cedis per acre to have our land ploughed. They give us no encouragement; what we see here are the big farmers and their friends enjoying the benefits of government-sponsored farming at the expense of us the small farmers.<sup>11</sup>

Such sentiments underlined quite clearly the perceptions of the small farmers as regards government policies which benefitted only the big farmers with connections, as for example, the prominent members of the RGA. These perceptions led to specific responses to the RGA, which we will now briefly consider.

#### Small Rice Farmers and the RGA

The RGA, as we noted in the last chapter, was formed supposedly to represent the interests of all farmers in the region, irrespective of size, but in effect it did not admit small producers. Out of 76 small rice farmers included in our sample survey, only one was a member of the Association. He claimed that up to the time of being interviewed he had not received any form of assistance from it - he joined in March 1977 - but remained hopeful that he would receive help at some time in the future.<sup>12</sup>

The only other small-scale farmer in our survey who had ever been a member was Issah Musah, a school teacher from Tamale, who had a 20 acre rice farm. He objected to the Association, however, on the grounds that it was too preoccupied with political issues while it tended to overlook the serious problems which confronted the farmers. As he put it:

The Association was so busy playing 'politics' that they seemed to forget about the needs of most of their members ... mainly those of us without machines. From the meetings I attended it was obvious to me that only a few members had a say, and these were the ones who gained from the Association. You had to be on their side if you wanted any help ... You had to support the right chief. And if you were a Southerner you were bound to come against opposition from some of the Northerners ... The Association was too divided (i.e. too cliquish) to serve our interests.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of small rice farmers, however, did not even bother to join the RGA. Most of these knew about the Association; and, even if they could not define clearly its aims and objectives, they were perfectly aware that it existed to promote the interests of the most prominent among its members. The point, however, was that those big farmers' interests did not correspond with their own. As far as the small farmers were concerned, there were two distinct groups of farmers in the North: the small and neglected farmers, and the big and privileged ones "with loans and tractors". It was this second group that the RGA represented. Generally, the opinion expressed by the small rice farmers was that they were not "big" enough to qualify for benefits from membership of the Association - a view which the Association did nothing to dispel, unfortunately. The following assortment of remarks may be regarded as fairly representative of such views:

1. "I have no loans from the bank so I am not fit to be a member."  
(W. Nemaye, 19.8.78)
2. "I am not a member because I don't feel up to their standard as far as means and resources are concerned."  
(Alhassan Yahaya, 19.8.78)
3. "I am aware of it (the Association) but I am not rich enough to be a member."  
(Musa Alhassan, 29.8.78)
4. "Only the rich ones are rewarded, so it's a waste of my time."  
(Seibu Mahama, 15.8.78)
5. "My position is not high enough, so I will not benefit from their help."  
(Sulemana Yakubu, 30.5.78)

The leadership did not accept that the views of these farmers were a reflection of the RGA's failure to provide assistance to all members, irrespective of size or political belief. According to these leaders, it was the farmers who had shown a reluctance to come forward and therefore had to accept the responsibility for their misunderstanding of the function of the RGA.<sup>14</sup> The Organiser compared the relationship between the small rice farmers and the RGA to that of a "beautiful lady"

whom men were afraid to approach because of the fear of being turned down.<sup>15</sup> According to him, the RGA worked in the interests of all rice farmers in the region, whether members or not, as demonstrated for example by its negotiation over the price of paddy. Again, according to the Organiser:

The executive do not ask for one price for its paddy and a different price for the members. We negotiate on behalf of all our members. It is unfair, therefore, to say that the Association gives representation only to one group of farmers at the expense of others.<sup>16</sup>

These were views held by one of the leading members of the RGA executive and constituted an obvious 'defence' of the leaders' position. They should not, therefore, be taken at face value. The relative priorities attached by the RGA in practice to the raising of the price of paddy and in securing subsidised inputs for members must be seen in their proper context. The former, after all, would benefit all rice farmers who sold their produce to the official Government Rice Mills. On the other hand, the latter would tend to favour the big and well-connected farmers since they were the ones who acquired these subsidised inputs.

#### Small Farmers' Co-operatives: An Alternative

The formation of small farmers' co-operatives was not new to the North. The Nkrumah government encouraged small farmers to group together to utilise the benefits of mechanised agriculture when tractors were first introduced to the region. The development of such co-operatives declined in the post-Nkrumah period, and by 1972 they were practically non-existent among the small farmers there. The failure of the Acheampong regime to provide subsidised inputs for these farmers, and the rapidly increasing demand for such inputs, led to a renewed interest in the co-operative movement, so that by 1977/78 several small rice farmers' co-operatives had been formed in the North. The formation of such

co-operatives was, in a sense a desperate attempt, since the benefits of membership were bound to be limited in view of the small farmers' weak economic and institutional position vis-à-vis the big and well-connected ones. They had no access to bureaucrats, owned no farm machinery between themselves, and did not have the contacts to secure crucial inputs. The most important benefit realised from group membership was a kind of economy of scale achieved by reciprocal labour services.

During my period of research I came across and noted the activities of several small farmers' groups from Yendi, Savelugu, Bimbilla, and Tamale. They differed from each other in their level of organisation and in their overall membership. In some cases there was no formal organisation, as provided for example, by the Lamashegu Farm Group where a register of members was kept by the Secretary who requested their services whenever required by other members of the group. There were no membership fees or meetings, and no elected committee. Members were recruited from the environs of Lamashegu by the Secretary. These groups also varied in size of membership: one from Yendi consisted of about twenty members, whereas the Savelugu Community Farmers had a membership of about one hundred. Each of these groups had one common objective: to pool together their resources (generally labour) so as to reduce the difficulties experienced from rice farming locally.

The 'Never Bad Boys' (NBB) group of Tamale was one of the best organised small farmers' co-operatives in the North. It started as a bicycle rental group with twelve members in 1962 and without any intentions of going into the farming business. But a sharp decline in the rental business, combined with the importance which rice farming had gained in the early 1970s, led to a change of outlook. By 1978 the group consisted of about seventy members, most of whom were full-time farmers; it also consisted of a number of taxi-drivers, tractor operators, and employees (labourers) of the Ministry of Agriculture in Tamale, who were all

part-time small rice farmers. During the so-called "rice boom" period of the early seventies several of these farmers unsuccessfully approached the financial institutions for loans. However, they pooled together whatever resources they had to get their group off the ground. Emphasis was placed on labour services, with members helping on each other's farms during the various farming processes - ploughing, weeding, or harvesting. According to the Chairman, their members wanted to take advantage of the profitability of rice farming, but their limited resources prevented them from investing in farm machinery, and so they had to utilize their greatest asset - labour. They therefore rendered their services free of charge.<sup>17</sup> At some stage the group decided upon cultivating a group farm, but the severe shortage of farm machinery and other inputs in the region were factors which decided against such a venture. According to one of the group's leaders, the NBB obtained a lease on a four-hundred acre field in Jimle (Yendi Road) in 1976, but were unable to obtain tractors from any of the local agencies, including the Ministry of Agriculture, or private owners to cultivate it. They would have had no problems, naturally, with labour services, since these would be given free of charge; they would have also been able to raise sufficient funds to purchase fertilizers but, as the Chairman said, the group was "too weak to challenge these very big and powerful farmers for tractors".<sup>18</sup> The project was temporarily abandoned, though it was intended to re-evaluate it as soon as another opportunity came up. Meanwhile, the members continued with their individual farming enterprises, depending on colleagues for help with labour services.

The NBB was not a pressure group, and was not officially recognised by the authorities in Tamale, although its Chairman claimed that it was known by "nearly all the big men in town".<sup>19</sup> This lack of recognition was one of the chief reasons for the various operational problems that its

members experienced throughout. By 1977 when small farmers were fighting for survival after a series of setbacks caused by drought and poor harvests, it was their conviction in the merits of the group and the hope that the situation might later improve that kept them going, according to the Chairman. As he pointed out, the conditions under which they were operating were unfavourable from several points of view. This was how he expressed their feelings:

We paid between 14 and 16 cedis for a bag of fertilizer which we bought from the big farmers. They bought that same fertilizer from Agric. for 6 cedis a bag. Then they force us to sell our rice to the Rice Mills at 70 cedis. Now where do the big men sell theirs? Not to the Rice Mills ... they smuggle most of it to neighbouring countries and they make huge profits. Then, take the problem of transport, and tractors. Since we do not own them, they charge us too much ... So who is gaining from this business? We cannot compete against the big farmers, because they already have the advantage over us. Everyone is on their side, including the government. We are only struggling to survive, especially as we do not have any other means of existence.<sup>20</sup>

These views summed up fairly accurately the desperate situation in which these farmers found themselves around the mid-1970s. If this situation were to improve it would have required a radical reappraisal of agricultural policies as regards small farmers. Early in 1978 the Special Marketing Unit (SMU) was introduced to the North by the authorities as a small farmers' organisation. How did the farmers respond to it, and what did it achieve as far as providing a realistic level of assistance for these farmers was concerned?

#### Small Rice Farmers and the SMU

The SMU was set up nationally in 1976 as a pilot exercise and was originally attached to the Ministry of Agriculture. Its main function was to assist farmers with the marketing of their produce. Producing areas were organised into units, usually consisting of two or three villages, by marketing organisers who negotiated with farmers the price

levels at which their produce was to be sold. The Food Distribution Corporation (FDC), the sole buyer of farmers' produce, was responsible for its transportation from the villages. As a pilot scheme the SMU was hardly successful in meeting the small farmers' needs as demonstrated, for example, by the operation of its Bimbilla branch. Early in 1976 a tractor was allocated to this Unit for the purpose of carting small farmers' produce from remote areas. The demand for its services was so high that local organisers were forced to request another.<sup>21</sup> The administrators in Accra, however, were not co-operative and suggested that in their estimation the allocated tractor was adequate for local needs, and that it was not possible to review the matter until a much later date.<sup>22</sup> Despite such bureaucratic constraints, the SMU continued to appeal to the rural populace since there was a demand for the type of services it provided.

It was this sort of demand for help by small farmers throughout the country which later suggested to the regime that it should capitalise on the situation and mobilise such farmers into 'Units' for the purpose of winning political support. Even if there was already some support for the regime among a section of the small farmers (and it was by no means certain that the majority of them supported the government up to that time), the setting up of the Unit officially as a small farmers' organisation, with the promise to help members in various ways, was in fact a strategy designed only to win wider support among this group of farmers. With this objective in view, the regime decided to take over the 'management' of the SMU, and in June 1977 its control was effectively transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Office of the SMC in Accra where it was headed by Lt. Col. Akompi.<sup>23</sup> In compliance with this strategy, all Regional Agricultural Economists were ordered to hand over the local administration and operational control of the Unit to the

"most senior and responsible District Organiser" (appointed by the SMC) in their region.<sup>24</sup>

Membership recruitment in the North started in January, a few weeks before the March 1978 referendum. It was the first time in its history that the Unit was organised on a membership basis, with members having to register and carry identity cards. Recruitment centres were set up in every agricultural district in the North.<sup>25</sup> According to the District Organiser in Tamale, the object behind the recruitment and registration of members was to enable the Unit "to keep a record of the number of farmers needing help".<sup>26</sup>

Membership of the Unit was regarded as a promising and exciting prospect by the majority of local farmers. According to the District Organiser, within two months of starting its membership campaign, the Unit had already registered about 70 per cent of the small farmers in the Tamale district, and about 60 per cent in the North as a whole.<sup>27</sup> Even if these statistics are questionable (and there was reason to suppose that the District Organiser, a staunch pro-Unigov supporter, was himself making capital of the issue) there was no doubt about the enthusiasm with which the Unit was received by many small farmers. As far as they were concerned, the SMU was a small farmers' version of the RGA, and was formed with the specific purpose of providing them with all their needs. Help was promised in nearly all areas related to farming; the purchase of fertilizers, tractor services, transportation, and most crucially, loans.

The SMU's promise to solve the small farmers' problems was therefore the crux of its appeal. For the first time in several years these farmers started to believe that the government was actually taking an interest in their welfare. As one group of these farmers in Nyankpala pointed out, for many years they had been asking the government for help

with tractors and fertilizers, but it was only after General Acheampong's visit to the North that the government seemed to appreciate their alarmingly precarious situation.<sup>28</sup> According to them, whereas the authorities had previously entertained only the big farmers, they had now recognised the contribution which they - the small farmers - were making in terms of feeding the nation. Consequently, the establishment of the SMU, or their 'Association', as they preferred to call it, was an acknowledgment of their growing importance as a group (of farmers).<sup>29</sup>

District Organisers were equally enthusiastic about the prospects of the Unit. For example, during meetings with the farmers, notes were apparently taken about individual and group needs, and regular reports were submitted to the Unit's headquarters in Accra. By February/March 1978 when the SMU was at the height of its popularity in the North, a tractor was allocated for the whole of the Northern Region, but according to the District Organiser, their aim was to get at least "one tractor for each station in the North".<sup>30</sup>

Of course the regime had to make a gesture if it wanted to win the support of this important sector. Hence the allocation of the tractor to the area. It was a totally inadequate response. How did the authorities expect just a single tractor to serve the immediate and colossal needs of the thousands of small farmers in the region? It simply could not. But, as far as the regime was concerned, such a gesture had the important (and desired) effect of winning support for it among the small farmers. The farmers in turn mistakenly regarded this as a mark of the regime's 'commitment' to their cause, and the promise of more to come simply reinforced this opinion. Furthermore, there were promises that fertilizers and other urgent farm inputs would be made available. According to the District Organiser, arrangements had been made with the Ministry of Agriculture to supply every small farmer with his needs.<sup>31</sup>

The SMU, Small Rice Farmers and Political Support

Local organisers claimed that the Unit was instrumental in winning support for the government during the referendum. Members were strongly advised to vote "Yes", though it is conceivable that not all of them did so. Many joined not because they were supporters of the military regime, but because they welcomed the prospect of receiving help with their basic farming needs.<sup>32</sup> It was taken for granted that if a farmer was a card-carrying member of the SMU, then he was automatically a supporter of the regime and would accordingly qualify for help by the Unit. This was not necessarily the case in practice. As one member explained: "If I did not join, I would have no chance of getting small help from anyone. So I had to pretend I was for "Yes".<sup>33</sup>

The actual extent in the North of the small farmers' support for the government during the referendum cannot be accurately judged in the absence of a systematic opinion survey and, even if such a survey had been conducted, it would be difficult to assess its reliability in view of the prevailing conditions under which the campaign was conducted.<sup>34</sup> It is known, however, that the Unit's success in recruiting members was highly uneven from one area to another. Its greatest degree of success in Dagbon was in traditional Andani areas, such as Tamale or Mion, while in Abudulai controlled areas the level of recruitment was considered to be very poor. This pattern suggests that there was a correlation between membership of the Unit and factional support. The views of the Tamale District Officer tend to confirm this hypothesis. He observed that it was easier to recruit members in Andani supported villages because of the co-operation of the chiefs. As he further explained,

Our chiefs informed all their villagers about the work of the Unit and told them all to join ... We didn't have difficulty in registering members in Mion, Gushiegu and many other stations. I would say that every small farmer in these villages joined the Unit. But in some villages like Tolon and some parts of Savelugu, and I would say Yendi as well, it was not so easy to convince the

farmers. Only a few joined. It is because of their chiefs who did not co-operate.<sup>35</sup>

These, of course, were very strong Abudulai constituencies.

While the SMU succeeded in recruiting a large number of pro-Andani small farmers who were supporters of Unigov, it also attracted a few Abudulai supporters. The difference was that: these Abudulai farmers were not supporters of the regime and therefore did not vote for Unigov. Those who joined did so to take advantage of membership benefits. As one Abudulai supporter from Tamale admitted: "I became a member because they promised us help ... anything that would relieve me of my misery was worth taking a chance, but I was not for Unigov".<sup>36</sup>

As far as Dagbon was concerned, the SMU, therefore, was not very effective in itself in gaining support for Unigov. Rather, most of those who joined were already likely to vote for Unigov because they were supporters of the pro-government local faction.

The vast majority of Abudulai supporters declined to join the SMU because they considered that it was manipulated by the authorities in order to win support for the government. For example, during discussions with a group of such supporters at the ex-Regent's palace in Savelugu, it became clear that these regarded the Unit as a political organisation, and that they had therefore resisted all inducements to join. Several recruiting officers had come to their villages at one time or another, making various promises to the local people, but on each occasion they had been "chased away". On one occasion, even the Army and Police were called to a meeting in Savelugu where farmers were being recruited. However, even when political pressure was brought to bear upon Abudulai supporters to join - such as the threat by the DCE (Tamale) that if they did not join the Unit and vote for Unigov they would be regarded as enemies of the State and would suffer the consequences - these farmers did not yield to these threats. As one member of the group explained:

They know our people have received no help from the authorities. For many years now we have been left to provide for ourselves ... they used to give us fertilizer, but now all the depots in the district are empty. They are telling us to join their Association (the SMU), because if we don't join we will not receive help. But that is a trick, because when the time comes to give the help they are promising, they will give it to their friends instead.<sup>37</sup>

Of course these small farmers were aware that as Abudulai supporters they did not expect to be given any favours in a system of patron-clientelism that was controlled at the local level by Andani networks. Sentiments similar to the above were expressed by other Abudulai supporters throughout Dagbon, but more especially in Yendi, Tolon, and Tamale.

The popularity of the SMU among those of its supporters in the North was very short-lived, with the result that it suffered a sharp drop in membership. A number of factors contributed to its decline. In the first place, despite official rhetoric, organisers in Accra placed too little emphasis on the actual needs of the farmers. Funds that were officially earmarked to provide facilities for the farmers were diverted to political purposes, principally to finance the Unigov campaign. As one senior official reportedly claimed before a committee investigating the operations of the SMU, 2 million cedis allocated to the Unit for its operations was used for this campaign, while salaries of senior staff doubled over a period of months leading to the referendum.<sup>38</sup>

The disillusionment of members over the failure of the regime to provide even the minimum of assistance was such that by May, a mere two months after the referendum, the Unit was forced to stop recruiting new members. The Tamale District Officer put the problem into perspective:

By that time the farmers had lost so much interest ... that they were not coming to meetings any more, and they ceased paying their membership dues. We did not have anything left to offer them ...<sup>39</sup>

Local officials were more or less unanimous in their opinion that the SMU could have survived jointly both as a farmers' organisation and as a

political wing of the SMC, but, they claimed, the government was insufficiently committed to do anything about the problems affecting the small farmers. As one SMU official from Walewale put it, if the Unit were to succeed, the men at the top, including the Director, would have to be removed, but unfortunately "the government was not serious, and it lacked the courage to deal with corrupt officials at the top level".<sup>40</sup>

By the time that Acheampong was removed from office in July 1978, the Unit had ceased to function in any meaningful way. His removal, however, did not improve the effectiveness of the SMU as a small farmers' organisation, and within weeks of his dismissal there was a call by senior officials of the Ministry of Agriculture to restore it back to the Ministry. This was effected in August 1978. Of course there was no logical reason to suppose that the newly-installed (Akuffo) regime would be more sympathetic towards the cause of the small farmers, since that regime consisted by and large of the same men as its predecessor. Initially, it was merely a change of leadership and a reshuffle of commissioners and top bureaucrats. But the farmers' desperation was such that they conceived of such a change as indicative of a new approach which might have led to more favourable agricultural policies as far as they were concerned. It turned out that the newly-constituted SMC was neither motivated by a concern to institute the changes which it had earlier visualised, nor characterised by a capacity to do so, with the consequence that it was not long before these farmers realised that their optimism was unfounded. The absence of a comprehensive farming policy had the ultimate effect of alienating the small farmers. Some of these, however, did not 'resign' to the situation, but adopted a certain degree of retaliatory measures against the system, as the example of a small group from Tamale will demonstrate.

Case Study: The Gumbehene Action Group

A few weeks after the new SMC was installed in power, I interviewed a group of about twenty small rice farmers (who were members of a larger group) in the Gumbehene ward of Tamale.<sup>41</sup> This group did not seem to be formally organised, politically or otherwise, although they met quite frequently. Their main concern, inevitably, was with problems relating to rice farming activities.

Most of these farmers were forced to reduce their acreages (both of rice and other crops) during the 1978 season because of the acute shortage of farm inputs, more especially tractors, fertilizers and capital. One of these estimated that he needed about 600 cedis to weed his farm, which included about 30 acres of rice. He had already borrowed 250 cedis from one of his brothers, and had approached the ADB for an overdraft since, he said, he was aware of the supposed role of that Bank in helping small farmers. His application was turned down on the grounds that he applied too late, but he was advised to try again the following year. That was the usual story. This farmer claimed that he had been given the same excuse for two years running and that he was no longer surprised at the Bank's decision. But what made him "very angry" was the refusal of the authorities to help the poor farmers while at the same time increasing their assistance to some of the big farmers. To make matters worse, the Akuffo regime had failed to probe the "kalabule" farmers, contrary to what the public had been led to expect. According to him, some big farmers were rather receiving many new tractors from the government and were farming on a bigger scale than ever before, whilst the small farmers were contracting in size.<sup>42</sup> The Gumbehene Group claimed that they felt it was their duty to find out what plans the new regime had for helping small farmers, since all they had been given so far was "a sackful of empty promises". Their case was therefore taken to the Regional

Office by a delegation of three, headed by Alhassan (who assumed the role of group leader), around the end of August 1978.<sup>43</sup>

There they met the Military Assistant (MA)<sup>44</sup> to whom they explained the object of their visit, and who advised them, wrongly, to take their problems to their representative organisation, i.e. the RGA. As far as the Regional Office was concerned, it could not explain details of policy to individual groups of farmers. The delegation pointed out that they were members of the SMU, but that this had so far been of no help to them, except with the supply of some basic essential commodities. According to these representatives, the MA grew impatient and ordered soldiers who were nearby to throw them out and have them punished. They were severely beaten up and had their heads shaven in humiliation by the soldiers.<sup>45</sup>

Rather than act as a deterrent, such brutality strengthened the members' resolve. They sought ways and means of 'retaliating', though of course there was little that they could do to cause serious concern to the authorities. They decided to brief as many small farmers as possible within their vicinity about the treatment which their 'leaders' had received, and of the inflexibility of the authorities with regard to helping small farmers. Within a short time they were able to recruit about forty farmers to their group, most of whom were small rice growers. They called themselves the Gumbehene Action Group, and did not extend their activities to anyone outside Gumbehene, nor to anyone who seemed likely to betray them. They needed to be circumspect since any leak of their clandestine activities could have landed them into serious further difficulties with the authorities.

One of the specific courses of action agreed upon by these farmers was the holding back of the sale of paddy to the Government Rice Mills during the 1978 harvest and sell to private traders instead. Between

them, the members of the Gumbehene Group cultivated nearly 600 acres of rice, and expected a total yield of between 3,000 and 4,000 bags of paddy that year. Their decision against selling to the Rice Mills was based on both moral and economic considerations. In the first place, they argued, since they had received no help from the government, they felt no obligation to sell to its Rice Mills at official prices. They further argued that since they had to fend for themselves to obtain tractor services and other inputs at exceedingly high market prices rather than at subsidised rates, then it was "fair and proper" (if they were to realise a small profit) for them to sell their produce at a higher price than the guaranteed minimum price offered by the government. As one of them explained: "If they have left us on our own from the start, then it is up to us to do what we want with our produce".<sup>46</sup>

The Gumbehene small farmers were not the only such group to express dissatisfaction with the performance of the regime. On the whole small farmers throughout the North were aware of the problems that faced them as small producers. But the difference between these and the Gumbehene Group was one of organised response. The latter went beyond a mere recognition of the situation: they translated their feelings into a positive line of action - one of the few courses that was reasonably open to them under the circumstances.

Some small producers were known in the past to have withheld the sale of their paddy from the Rice Mills as a form of 'protest' against the government's lack of assistance to them. I was reliably informed that a number of small producers in the Savelugu sub-districts had not sold rice to the Government Mills for two successive seasons from 1977. These farmers were strong supporters of the Abudulai chieftaincy faction who claimed that they had been relentlessly victimised by the regime because of their opposition to it. My informant, who was a trader,

estimated that between 1,000 and 1,500 bags of paddy were involved each year and sold directly to market women or to traders like himself.<sup>47</sup> Of course such commonplace action by small rice farmers was bound to have some disruptive effect on the level of official purchases. Although these small farmers could be accused in a sense of acting against the interest of the State, such action could hardly be considered immoral racketeering in view of the conditions under which they were operating. The main offenders were the big farmers whose smuggling activities could be regarded as 'immoral', in a way that those of the small farmers could not, since the former had received subsidised inputs.

The Gumbehene Action Group's rebellious dissatisfaction with the military regime's agricultural policies found expression in their attitude towards the government during the referendum. Their leaders, including Alhassan, 'campaigned' against Unigov in the Gumbehene neighbourhood - "NO" stickers were still evident on the outside walls of their houses several months later - and they believed that the majority of Gumbehene farmers on the whole had followed their lead. All members of the group voted against Unigov, according to their testimony. They had by then become so bitterly disillusioned with the government that they were left with no other choice than to oppose it. As one of them claimed, to have voted "Yes" would be to condone an evil system which could have only aggravated an already hopeless situation, as well as "the growing misery of the poor farmers".<sup>48</sup>

As already noted, the Gumbehene Group of small farmers was exceptional in its level of concerted action. The attitude of the group was no doubt influenced by the presence among them of three militant 'leaders'. Two of these, Alhassan and Sulemana, were former employees of the Ministry of Agriculture at the Fertilizer Depot, and both had been active (but unofficial) organisers of workers there; they were both

mainly held responsible by the authorities for a demonstration in 1976 by the Depot workers in protest over pay conditions. Both activists subsequently resigned from their jobs with the Ministry and took up full-time rice farming on a small-scale basis. The other 'leader' of the group, Ibrahim, was formerly employed by the Regional Administration as a carpenter, but he too left to take up farming full-time because, he claimed, he hoped that it would prove more lucrative. The other members of the group were neither as militant nor as articulate as the 'leaders', but were quite outspoken on various issues affecting their farming, and as a group they were committed, in their own words, "to organise all the farmers in Gumbehene so that we can speak as a force and make them (the government) listen to us".<sup>49</sup>

In this chapter we attempted an examination of the various levels of responses by small farmers to prevailing government policies as regards subsidised farm inputs. Organisations such as the RGA and the SMU were set up supposedly to assist these farmers, but in practice functioned either to win political support for the regime locally or to provide benefits for its supporters among the large and prominent rice farmers. The unwillingness of the regime to introduce a comprehensive farming policy in the North led to these farmers forming self-help projects or co-operatives. The overall shortage of resources and their non-availability to small farmers meant that these projects' achievements were considerably limited and led, in the case of the more militant groups, to an adoption of 'retaliatory' measures, such as members' refusal to sell paddy to the Government Rice Mills.

How did such experiences influence these farmers' behaviour during the 1979 elections? Did they support parties on the basis of their declared policies? What were those policies? These and other considerations form the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. Bates, op. cit., pp. 57-59.
2. The NBB (Never Bad Boys) which is examined in some detail later in this chapter, was a small farmers' co-operative based in Tamale.
3. Interview with Alhassan Fuseini, NBB Vice-Chairman, Tamale, 15 August 1978.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. For example, Chief Farmer Alhaji Yakubu was a firm believer in the view that the cultivation of traditional food crops - yams, maize, millet, groundnuts and guinea corn - provided the small farmers with their best chances of making a useful contribution to the agricultural development programme. Interview, Tamale, 22 April 1978.
8. Interview with Alhaji Salifu Abdul-Rahamani, Tamale, 25 April 1978.
9. Interview with Ibrahim Alhassan, Tamale, 26 May 1978.
10. Interview with Adam Dasana, Tamale, 26 May 1978.
11. Ibid.
12. Mohammed Abudulai acquired a 100 acre field in Nabogo, but for the past few seasons prior to 1978 he had not been able to cultivate more than 10 acres of it due to difficulties in obtaining tractor services and other inputs. Interview, Savelugu, 14 August 1978.
13. Interview with Issah Musah, Tamale, 9 June 1978.
14. Interview with Alidu Abu, RGA Organiser, Tamale, 29 April 1978.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Interview with Issifu Mohammed, NBB Chairman, Tamale, 16 August 1978.
18. Ibid.
19. It would be far more accurate to describe the NBB as being unknown to the authorities. My interviews with heads of the various institutions - the Banks, government corporations, DEMCO, Ministry of Agriculture, Nasia Rice Company, the RGA, etc.- suggested that none of these had heard of this group. On the individual level, however, a few 'big farmers' claimed to have heard of the group.
20. Interview with NBB Chairman, 16 August 1978.

21. Correspondence from DCE Bimbilla to Regional Agricultural Economist, Tamale, dated 19 December 1976. Ministry of Agriculture Files, Tamale.
22. Letter from the Director of Economic Research and Planning Services, Accra, to the Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale; dated 10 January 1977. Ministry of Agriculture Files, Tamale.
23. Letter from Director of Economic Research and Planning Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Accra, dated 9 June 1977. Ministry of Agriculture Files, Tamale.
24. Ibid.
25. Stations were established in the Northern Region at Tamale, Yendi, Gushiegu, Salaga, Kpandai, Damongo, Bole, Nalerigu and Walewale.
26. Interview with Abudulai Yakubu, SMU Tamale District Organiser, Tamale, 4 June 1978.
27. Ibid.
28. General Acheampong visited the Northern and Upper Regions in January 1978 on a 'meet the people tour' in order to promote his Union Government concept.
29. Informal interview with a group of small farmers at Nyankpala, 2 March 1978.
30. Abudulai Yakubu, 4 June 1978.
31. Ibid.
32. The District Officer admitted that members were "strongly reminded" at meetings that they were being helped by Government and that they would continue to receive help by the Unit "as long as they supported the Government". Interview with Abudulai Yakubu, 4 June 1978.
33. Interview with Saibu Mahama, Tamale, 28 June 1978.
34. We have already mentioned that in some areas in the North there were several reported cases of harassment of anti-Unigov supporters, especially in areas that were traditionally Abudulai, such as Savelugu and Yendi.
35. Interview with Abudulai Yakubu, 4 June 1978.
36. Informal interview with Alhassan Iddrisu, Gumbehene, 18 March 1978.
37. Informal discussion with a group of small farmers at the ex-Regent's Palace, Savelugu, 4 March 1978.
38. Ghanaian Times, 24 July 1979.
39. Interview with Abudulai Yakubu, 4 June 1978.
40. Interview with Ahmed Yaro, SMU Recruiting Officer, Walewale, 11 July 1978.

41. This was more or less an informal interview with a group of farmers, two of whom had been formally interviewed earlier during fieldwork. It was during the course of one of these early interviews that I was informed about the activities of this group. The discussion took place on 14 September 1978, at the pleasant Gumbehene Pito Bar in Tamale, where this group met regularly.
42. These views were expressed by Sule Nantiare, a member of the Group. The acquisition of about a dozen new tractors by Alhaji Sumani Zakaria earlier in the year was the subject of popular gossip among people who regarded it as a personal reward from Acheampong for his loyal support of the regime during the Unigov campaign. It naturally brought resentment from the small farmers who expected some at least to be retrieved and made available to them.
43. Interview with members of Gumbehene Action Group, 14 September 1978.
44. Major Nantogma, the MA, acted as Secretary to the Regional Commissioner. His account of the incident corresponded roughly to that of the members of the delegation, but it varied in interpretation.
45. Interview with Alhassan, Gumbehene, 14 September 1978.
46. Informal interview with Gumbehene Action Group, 14 September 1978.
47. My informant was a very strong supporter of the Abudulai gate, and a trader in Savelugu.
48. Sulemana, op. cit.
49. Ibid.

CHAPTER 9RICE FARMERS AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR AFTER ACHEAMPONG

In this chapter we will examine the political behaviour of Dagomba rice farmers as far as the 1979 elections were concerned. The elections were of special significance to these rice farmers who were basically polarised into two 'interest' groups or factions. Through these elections the farmers would be given an opportunity to support the party which best represented their specific group interests, and through which they hoped to obtain economic assistance via patron-client networks based on local chieftaincy ties. As we shall see, gate loyalties rather than occupational class considerations, determined political behaviour among Dagomba rice farmers. But before we examine such behaviour in detail, we will consider first what the fall of Acheampong meant to the rice farmers, especially those prominent rice farmers who owed their position of influence to his personal sponsorship and whose existence as a 'class' was initially threatened in the immediate aftermath of his removal.

Acheampong was removed as Head of State because of the deteriorating economic and political situation in the country under his rule, and the fears of his fellow officers that his system of personal rule would exclude them from important decision-making processes and the loss of influence within the government. Thus after six years, he was finally removed from the political scene in July 1978 and replaced by colleagues who claimed to be better equipped to lead the country.

The immediate effect of the removal of Acheampong upon the prominent rice farmers was that it made their position extremely vulnerable, especially as his successor, General Akuffo, gave the impression (falsely) of being determined to redress the evils of the

society and punish all those who had contributed to the general malaise of the country through hoarding, profiteering, and general corruption. The leading RGA farmers certainly came under this category, and were well-known for their activities in smuggling and hoarding, not to mention other crimes against the state, such as the receipt of large unrepaid bank loans.

#### Reaction of Abudulai Rice Farmers to the Removal of Acheampong

Those who stood to gain most from Acheampong's dismissal were the Abudulai supporters - the regime's traditional opponents in Dagbon. As far as the Abudulai contingent was concerned (and this consisted of both farmers and non-farmers), the fall of Acheampong's regime raised clear possibilities of restoring their candidate back to the Yendi paramountcy.<sup>1</sup> Indeed this faction had especially good reason to be optimistic since one of its own princes, General Joshua Hamidu, had been elevated from a relatively obscure post in the diplomatic service to Chief of Defence Staff in the reconstituted SMC.<sup>2</sup>

The Abudulai supporters among the rice farmers, for their part, believed that the fall of Acheampong would lead to the re-organisation of the RGA and would thereby introduce a more equitable system of resource allocation among the farmers. Their real hope was to displace the Andani farmers from the RGA leadership. It was the contention of these farmers, and an accurate one too, that the main reason why the leaders of the Association were so successful with their farming was precisely because they used their position of influence to allocate among themselves resources that were intended for all members: bank loans, mechanised farm services, fertilizers, etc. As an interviewee put it:

They (the prominent farmers) had the bank managers on their side, and they took all the big commissioners in Accra as

friends. In Tamale here, they are free (i.e. can relate very well) with the big men at Agric., Nasia Rice, DEMCO, NRDC ... everywhere. They received all their needs ... that's why they are so rich from farming: not because they are better farmers, but because they received more help than others ... So that is why I would say there must be a change in the Association to make things more equal.<sup>3</sup>

These farmers were therefore waiting for an opportune moment to call for the re-organisation of the RGA and for a change in the executive - as they had unsuccessfully attempted before. However, they were also cautious in their assessment of the new government. They did not expect immediate and wholesale changes, but they expected a change of direction and emphasis as far as the conduct of RGA business was concerned. According to them, the pro-Unigov (Andani) farmers had dominated the Association and abused their position for too long, now they should be made to toe the line.<sup>4</sup>

#### Reaction from Prominent Andani Rice Farmers

But what did the downfall of Acheampong really mean to the big Andani, pro-Acheampong, rice farmers? The answer lay in an understanding of the relationship between these farmers and senior government officials with whom they were closely associated. In an effort seemingly designed to break its continuity with Acheampong, the new regime decided on a policy of 'retiring' or posting to less important offices those officers who were closely identified with that regime's policies.

The dismissals which most shattered the confidence of the big farmers were those of their closest allies with important business and farming interests throughout the North. The first of these, Major-General R.E.A. Kotei, former Chief of Defence Staff, was a property and transport owner. He was also a very big rice farmer with at least two farms in the North, and a large supply of farm machinery and equipment.

While Kotei was on duty in Accra, one of his farms was managed by a senior military officer serving in Tamale, and the other by the Director of the Cotton Development Board. Kotei, who was instrumental in getting import licences for at least two of his rice-farming colleagues in the North, was replaced as Chief of Defence Staff by Major-General Joshua Hamidu, a long-time critic of the Acheampong style of administration and, as we have seen, a prominent member of the Abudulai gate.

If the resignation of Major-General Kotei had a shattering effect on the morale and confidence of the big farmers, their dismay was further intensified by the sacking of another of their chief allies, Major-General E.K. Utuka, former Border Guard Commander. It could not be confirmed whether Utuka had any rice farms in the North - though, if he did not, he would have been one of the very few top military officers not to have done so - but in any case his close ties with the top men of the RGA, who often boasted unashamedly of going to Accra to "discuss business" with him, suggests that his removal from office was a major blow to such farmers' already precarious position. Utuka was known to have assisted some of these farmers in getting their consignment of smuggled rice across border check-points.<sup>5</sup> A Border Guard officer from Tamale, who was posted to the Ghana/Upper Volta check-point at Paga, confirmed that senior officers often violated the law by using their authority to let their friends across the border with smuggled goods. In such matters the guards could hardly challenge the authority of a top-ranking officer from Accra or Tamale; they were merely 'small boys' carrying out orders.<sup>6</sup> Utuka himself was later accused and found guilty by an AFRC tribunal of using his position as Border Guard Commander to smuggle several tons of timber from Ghana, an act which, along with other alleged corrupt practices, led to his

execution by firing squad during the early reign of that regime.

Among those commissioners to be 'retired', the one who was perhaps closest to the big farmers was Colonel Roger Felli, former Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, who was regarded as a local 'hero' because of his contribution to the development of the North, especially the Upper Region. Like many of his colleagues, Felli had several farms situated both in the Northern and Upper Regions, with a large fleet of tractors and several combine harvesters. There can be no question whatsoever about the extent to which Felli helped his local friends. As a Northerner he wanted to see the region develop, and regarded his assistance to these rice farmers as a personal contribution towards this end. By personal intervention he was able to arrange several loans for Alhaji Zakaria in Accra, and was personally responsible for taking in from Germany in 1977 two Mercedes Benz cars for this farmer.<sup>7</sup> Felli also assisted Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama "in several very important ways" with his business enterprises.<sup>8</sup> Several of the RGA leaders had regular audiences with him, and he was always willing to meet these farmers. With the possible exception of Acheampong, Felli was no doubt the most popular of the Commissioners among the big rice farmers.

The fears of these prominent rice farmers were further heightened by the new regime's proposals for rejecting Acheampong's concept of Union Government and replacing it instead with its proposed National Government formula. The main difference between the Union Government of Acheampong and the Transitional (Interim) National Government of Akuffo was this: whereas the first type would embrace all strata of society including, of course, the Armed Forces and Police, the second would exclude the latter institutions altogether. Furthermore, while the Acheampong model was to be a permanent one, the Akuffo version was to be an "interim" solution recommended for a period of "not less than

four years" duration, after which the people would decide on a permanent constitution.<sup>9</sup> This compromise, if indeed it was a compromise, had, according to the Daily Graphic, reconciled several factions of Ghanaian society - the political aspirants, the proponents of no party politics, and the vast majority of people "who became totally confused when the cross-talk on what form of government Ghana should choose was going on at full steam".<sup>10</sup>

There is no room in this thesis to go into the implications of the debate on these proposed concepts of government - that belongs entirely to a different area of study - but it might be mentioned in passing that there was less consensus among Ghanaians on the 'National Government' proposed by Akuffo than there was on Acheampong's Unigov. The National Government proposal met with opposition from various groups in the country, although the intellectuals - academics, students, teachers, and other professionals, notably the lawyers - were in the vanguard of opposition. At its 1978 Annual Conference held in Kumasi, the Ghana Bar Association declared its total rejection of the National Government concept on the grounds that, first, the military regime was given no mandate by the country to determine its form of government and secondly, that it was the fundamental right of the people themselves to decide what form of constitution they would choose. The Association came out in favour of a multi-party system of government, such as the one operating under the 1969 Constitution (until it was suspended by the 1972 coup) with its "inbuilt corrective mechanism" by which the people could return or remove a particular government.<sup>11</sup>

As far as the pro-Acheampong rice farmers were concerned, the National Government formula did not provide any safety mechanisms for protecting their particular interests. Under Unigov they were at least offered "protection" through their alliance with the regime in general,

and by personal contacts with Acheampong and other military leaders in particular.<sup>12</sup> It was not a military regime as such that they supported, but rather one that patronised them. They felt that their personal aspirations would have been fulfilled under Unigov precisely because it would have been headed by Acheampong. According to one of the RGA leaders, the removal of General Acheampong and the abrogation of the Unigov proposal was bound to have a disastrous effect on the big rice farmers or rather, those among the big rice farmers who supported Acheampong. Acheampong promoted their welfare, and was regarded as one of their champions, not least because he owned rice farms in the North. He encouraged all the Commissioners to participate in the agrarian programme which resulted in most of them owning rice farms in the North. According to this RGA leader, the interest taken in rice farmers (or more precisely the prominent rice farmers), represented an important contribution to the general development of the North, and the continuation of Acheampong in office would have further improved that situation.<sup>13</sup>

The apparent intensification of the government's efforts to clamp down on corruption, hoarding and profiteering, together with the circulating rumours, whether factual or speculative, that certain people associated with the former regime would be probed, did not, to say the least, help the self-confidence of the big farmers. One of the prime subjects of this type of rumour-mongering in Tamale was Alhaji Sumani Zakaria. It was often heard that he was wanted for questioning in connection with loans received from Acheampong for the construction of his large terraced building in Tamale, as well as for other purposes. The legitimacy of the inordinately large quantity of tractors and farm machinery that he owned, together with a large fleet of taxis and lorries and property in general, was being questioned by opponents

the old regime, and in particular by people who had witnessed the unusually rapid accumulation of wealth (and power) by this farmer over a comparatively short time. In other words, the legitimacy of the wealth and property of one of the most successful rice farmers in the North had been put to question.<sup>14</sup> His critics could not come to believe that his vast riches were accumulated as a result of his successful rice farming enterprise, or his other business activities. It was too fantastic a story to be believed. During the period of the intensification of the emergency operations<sup>15</sup> Alhaji Zakaria was safely away in Upper Volta, and was to return to Tamale only when the operations had ceased, and his personal safety was assured.

The fears of these farmers about their position as a privileged rural elite did not in fact materialise. The Akuffo regime which assumed power on the basis of its fundamental differences with its predecessor, and gave the early impression of carrying out reforms that would justify its removal of the blatantly corrupt Acheampong, failed to achieve this objective. Akuffo soon revealed a "typical" weakness in dealing with the country's increasing economic and political problems, and proved to be no better than its predecessor in dealing with corruption, whether among government officials or the public in general.

Neither the State of Emergency nor any other measures employed by the new regime had the desired effect of effectively checking or eradicating the general level of corruption and profiteering in the country. The performance of the SMC-Akuffo government was increasingly being evaluated by civilians (and by a number of junior military officers as it later transpired) in terms of its "protectionist" attitude and interest. Rather than giving priority to policies effectively aimed at solving the economic and political problems that had been so damaging to the country, it was seen as protecting the interests of the officer

corps which had been 'pillaging' that same country for several years, and of which, the regime was a part.<sup>16</sup> As the tempo of the operations slowed down, and the country began to pick itself up in terms of its accustomed way of life, 'kalabule' continued to flourish unabated. Akuffo had proved to be a perfect cover-up for Acheampong.

As far as the privileged rice farmers were concerned, the Akuffo regime failed to dislodge their powerful position. In the first place it did not alter the balance of power between the two chieftaincy gates in Dagbon, and these farmers' relationship with local political structures did not alter. The overall influence of the Andani faction remained intact, despite early fears that this regime might prove sympathetic to the rival Abudulai gate. More crucial however, was the failure of the regime to alter the power structure of the RGA. Even the more optimistic of its leaders had entertained fears of an administrative shake-up within the Association. It was not long before any such fears were dispelled, and the same farmers' dominance of the RGA was marked by their resumption of activities on the same scale as before. Their relationship with banks and local agencies had not changed, but above all they continued their top-level meetings with government officials.

The lifting of the ban on political parties in January 1979 gave the big farmers the opportunity to group themselves into parties or to form alliances with other groups that were likely to represent their interests. A period which these farmers feared might have destroyed their privileged position in Dagbon was therefore safely negotiated, and they were preparing themselves to participate in the party political process. No one had believed it possible, least of all the farmers themselves, when six months earlier their world had seemingly turned upside down. As one leading farmer explained:

" ... Many people turned against us when General Acheampong fell from power. Several of us, as you would know, had to run away for our lives because we were very concerned about the policies of the new generals. But when you look back to the past few months, we have not come out as bad as we had originally feared ... Although they impounded some of our rice and other crops during the State of Emergency, it was not so bad because they did not maltreat us. They have now given us the chance to form parties, and as far as I can see we the farmers will have to be very careful with whom we join. Most people are talking about a party based on the north ...<sup>17</sup>

Thus the elections gave the opportunity to supporters of both Dagomba factions among the farmers to seek party affiliations that would best serve their particular interests. As we noted earlier in this Chapter, Dagomba rice farmers did not behave politically as a specific occupational group, but rather as members of rival 'traditional' political factions. Rice farming interests did not count for much as a distinctive interest.

#### Background to the Formation of Political Parties

It must be emphasised at this point that this is not a study of the general elections in the North, since such a task is clearly outside the scope of this dissertation. It is rather an account demonstrating the importance to political behaviour of a specific group identified on the basis of their connections with local chieftaincy.

The ban on political parties, which had been enforced since the military take-over by Acheampong in 1972, was lifted seven years later on 1st January 1979. Elections were scheduled to take place in June that year. The suppression of political activity during that period of the ban, except of course, of organisations sanctioned by the military, led to increasing frustration on the part of the more politically aware Ghanaians who had been witnessing a rapid decline of the economy and of social values under the magistrature of the military. Such frustration was manifest in the extra-ordinary number of political parties, pseudo-parties, and groups which started to spring up as soon as

the ban was lifted.

By the middle of January no less than sixteen political parties had been formed, though none had as yet been officially registered. Most of these were limited in scope and vision, none so obviously as the Vanguard Party of Dr. John Ackay Blay-Miezah, whose personal objective was (apparently) to achieve political and diplomatic influence to help him repatriate an alleged personal fortune lodged in the United States, and which he claimed would be used for the economic development of Ghana. Most of these parties, however, failed to meet the general requirements laid down by the government and failed as a result to be officially registered.<sup>18</sup> Only six parties finally complied with the conditions laid down by the Electoral Commissioner and were therefore eligible to contest the elections. These were:- the Popular Front Party (PFP), People's National Party (PNP), Action Congress Party (ACP), United National Convention (UNC), Social Democratic Front (SDF), and Third Force Party (TFP).

#### Rice Farmers and Party Political Formations

According to its founders, the SDF was not influenced by any partisan considerations, but with a view to offering the people of the North an alternative to either the PNP or the PFP.<sup>19</sup> At a meeting of the Northern Youth Association (NYA) in January 1978, a recommendation that the North should form an alternative party to the two major ones, the PNP and the PFP, was accepted; and, as a result, a new party, the SDF, dedicated to "sincerity, honesty and pragmatic policy" was created with the motto "Unity for power" to give leadership to the Northerners. Alhaji Abubakar Alhassan, a lecturer from the University of Science and Technology at Kumasi, was elected General Secretary of the party while Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama was made leader and Presidential nominee.

Alhassan was also selected as the party's parliamentary candidate for the Tamale constituency which he won. Colonel Felli was elected a member of the interim executive of the party. The SDF was financed mainly by prominent Andani supporters who were among the biggest and most successful rice farmers in the North. The party also benefitted from its alliance with the TUC. This alliance was made possible as a result of the relationship between the TUC General Secretary, Alhaji Issifu, and the SDF leader, Ibrahim Mahama, who were both blood members of the Andani royal family. Furthermore, Issifu was known to be a close business associate of Mahama and was instrumental in helping the SDF leader set up his travel business in Accra.

Among the leading rice farmers who joined the SDF were Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Alhaji Yahaya (the Kukuo Na who was also a transport owner and businessman), E.D. Mahama (businessman), Alhaji Abdul-Rahamani (transport owner and businessman), Alhaji Yakubu (RGA Chairman), O.S. Mahamadu (who was elected M.P. for Mion-Nanton), Ziblim Andan (Director of the Cotton Development Board), Alidu (RGA Organiser) and Alhaji Kpabia (businessman). These farmers constituted the founding members, but the party drew support from the entire leadership of the RGA as well as all other big rice farmers connected to the Andani gate.

The overwhelming support which the party received from the most influential rice farmers did not necessarily, however, make it a party generally representative of farmers' interests. The RGA leaders, together with other big and well-connected farmers, joined because the SDF was first and foremost a 'family' party, one set up by prominent members of the Andani chieftaincy gate. A successful SDF party would enhance Andani prestige locally through which members of this gate would benefit by consolidating already existing patron client networks. On the national level the party would give reliable representation to this

faction and would, as a consequence, reinforce the Andani position locally.

The SDF had the support also of small rice farmers who were traditional supporters of the Andani gate. Despite these farmers' failure to obtain adequate farming inputs under the prevailing system of allocation, they were still not prepared to abandon tradition and support a party on the basis of its ability to help small farmers. As far as these were concerned, gate loyalties meant much more to them than policies that were "glossed in party propaganda outfit".<sup>20</sup> Dagomba farmers (like all supporters of local chieftaincy) were far more concerned with preserving the 'prestige' which they associated with their respective gates than with 'issues' of national significance. As expressed by a member of a small group of Andani supporters:

We the small farmers in this group here voted for Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama (SDF) because he is from the same family (i.e. from the same chieftaincy gate). As far as we are concerned, he came to represent our side. Politicians in Accra do not care about the way and manner we respect our chiefs. Our life here in Dagbon is all about Andani and Abudulai. Not about the economy, cost of living, or all the big talk with which they try to confuse us. They have been talking about these things (issues) since the days of Nkrumah, and look at us! ... We are for Andani, and when Andani is in power in Dagbon we are proud, just like our ancestors before us. So that was why we voted SDF.<sup>21</sup>

This account by Ibrahim Iddi summed up fairly accurately Dagomba attitudes towards national parties and issues. National issues were of secondary importance to these people.

The PFP, unlike the SDF, its main rival in Dagbon, was not formed with the specific purpose of representing factional interests there. It was a national party in the true sense, having been supported throughout Ghana, though of course it was stronger in some regions (for example, the Ashanti Region where its main leadership originated) than in others. Indeed Jeffries has argued that the PFP was considered to be fairly well-placed to win the 1979 elections but for the (untimely)

intervention of Jerry Rawlings' AFRC which, he claimed, "dented" this party's image by the regime's condemnation of the country's reliance on western assistance - a policy to which the PFP leadership was clearly committed.<sup>22</sup>

The PFP's national outlook was also enhanced as a result of its links with the former PP. It was the PFP's historical links with the PP, a party which had previously given strong support to the Abudulai cause, that led to its adoption by this faction as the "natural" representative of its particular "interests". The "alliance" between the Abudulais and the PFP was further reinforced by the appointment of Tolon Na Yakubu Tali as the General Secretary of the party and its presidential running mate. The Tolon Na, we have already seen, was one of the most prominent (Abudulai) chiefs in Dagbon. Thus the position of this dignitary on the PFP hierarchy was of mutual interest to both sides. From the Abudulai's point of view it strengthened their identity with the PFP, while on the other hand it provided this party with a strong base in Dagbon.

It must not be assumed that the majority of rice farmers in the North as a whole voted for one or the other of the two aforementioned parties on the basis of their representing factional interests there. Our analysis is concerned specifically with the political behaviour of Dagomba farmers. As far as the Northern Region itself was concerned, it was the PNP, and not the SDF or PFP, which made the greatest impact. The PNP had some initial support among the Dagomba rice farmers and Dagombas generally, but this was very limited; as we shall see, however, its greatest impact upon Dagombas came during the second round presidential elections when the majority of SDF supporters switched to the PNP candidate in an effort to keep the PFP candidate out.

The PNP's popularity in the North generally was based upon two principal

figures: Imoru Egala and Hilla Limann. Egala was a politician of considerable experience and achievement, having served as a minister in the first all-African Cabinet of the Gold Coast, followed by important offices in the Nkrumah cabinet as Minister of Health (1959), and Minister of Industries (1962). He was a very influential personality, both at the local and national level. Egala was not a Dagomba, and therefore did not have any important connections with Dagomba chieftaincy factions which, inevitably, would have restricted his political manoeuvrability at least in one politically significant area in the North. At the national level he had created important and effective political networks which were fully exploited to the benefit of the party. Egala held the position of PNP party chairman, and was the party's presidential candidate until he was banned from holding public office under the Elections and Public Offices Disqualification (Disqualified Persons) Decree of 1976.<sup>23</sup>

Egala was replaced as presidential candidate by another Northerner, Hilla Limann. Limann had not played any significant role in the CPP regime and was therefore presented as a 'new' face to party politics. While the image which he presented in the South was one of dissociation from the 'old guard', as far as Northerners were concerned - Limann was actually from the Upper Region - he was a leader with whom they could be identified.

#### Party Support among Dagomba Rice Farmers

The analysis which follows is based upon the results of a survey conducted by the author as to the distribution of support for the various parties among farmers in four Dagomba constituencies in the Northern Region with which this dissertation is specifically concerned. The limited size of the sample which consisted of 128 large-scale and

160 small-scale rice farmers spread over the four constituencies (Tamale, Yendi, Tolon, and Savelugu) was influenced by the fact that we are particularly concerned with one section of the population - the rice farmers - and not the entire electorate. Before going further, we must clarify one or two points. In the first place, the survey consisted of 'unknown' farmers, i.e. farmers whose voting intentions or party affiliations were not previously known to the author. A small number of these farmers (14 in all) had been interviewed on my previous field trip (1978), but their voting attitudes could not have been known, since political parties were not yet formed, and party political activity was then banned. The majority of the sample, however, were 'new' interviewees. It must not be forgotten, however, that the subject here is factional politics, and the two contending parties, as far as this issue is concerned, were the PFP and the SDF. The constituencies covered, therefore, provide adequate representation of the interplay between factions and parties that represent those factions. Nothing beyond that was attempted.

As far as the results of the first round parliamentary elections were concerned, they confirmed an important observation about voting behaviour in Dagbon: that local issues rather than national issues influence such behaviour. A brief examination of Table 9.1 will illustrate this point. The two parties representing chieftaincy 'interests' in Dagbon, the SDF and the PFP, won all the Dagomba seats between them, sharing 82.2 per cent of all the votes cast in the Dagomba constituencies. The PNP, on the other hand, won only 7.5 per cent of the Dagomba vote.

As far as the rest of the Northern Region was concerned, the PNP won in seven constituencies, including the three Gonja constituencies, while the PFP won in Chereponi-Saboba. The SDF on the other hand was

TABLE 9.1: 1979 Parliamentary General Election Results  
Northern Region

Constituency	Party	Votes	Winner	Total Votes Cast
Tamale (D)	TFP	387		
	SDF	11,853	SDF	23,399
	ACP	514		
	UNC	1,285		
	PNP	1,967		
	PFP	7,393		
Tolon (D)	TFP	171		
	SDF	4,475		
	ACP	123		
	UNC	132		
	PNP	246		
	PFP	5,801	PFP	10,948
Walewale	TFP	127		
	SDF	389		
	ACP	209		
	UNC	223		
	PNP	6,405	PNP	8,832
	PFP	1,479		
Nalerigu	TFP	251		
	SDF	357		
	ACP	80		
	UNC	724		
	PNP	4,948	PNP	7,785
	PFP	1,425		
Bunkpurugu	TFP	167		
	SDF	362		
	ACP	431		
	UNC	249		
	PNP	2,847	PNP	5,790
	PFP	1,734		
Nanumba	TFP	210		
	SDF	2,912		
	ACP	286		
	UNC	843		
	PNP	4,063	PNP	10,695
	PFP	2,381		
Gushiegu (D)	TFP	398		
	SDF	2,343		
	ACP	N/C		
	UNC	239		
	PNP	1,348		
	PFP	2,757	PFP	7,085

Constituency	Party	Votes	Winner	Total Votes Cast
Savelugu (D)	TFP	269		
	SDF	4,146	SDF	7,832
	ACP	N/C		
	UNC	264		
	PNP	384		
	PFP	2,769		
Mion-Nanton (D)	TFP	449		
	SDF	4,761	SDF	7,845
	ACP	N/C		
	UNC	288		
	PNP	353		
	PFP	1,994		
Chereponi-Saboba	TFP	N/C		
	SDF	1,160		
	ACP	154		
	UNC	825		
	PNP	2,387		
	PFP	2,627	PFP	7,153
Yendi (D)	TFP	366		
	SDF	3,787		
	ACP	271		
	UNC	570		
	PNP	856		
	PFP	6,103	PFP	11,953
Gonja West	TFP	233		
	SDF	556		
	ACP	429		
	UNC	2,566		
	PNP	4,840	PNP	11,802
	PFP	3,178		
Gonja Central	TFP	582		
	SDF	1,629		
	ACP	N/C		
	UNC	2,026		
	PNP	4,856	PNP	12,224
	PFP	3,131		
Gonja East	TFP	269		
	SDF	254		
	ACP	1,071		
	UNC	1,315		
	PNP	4,140	PNP	9,420
	PFP	2,371		

Notes: (i) N/C = Not Contested  
(ii) (D) = Dagomba

Source: Adapted from Legon Observer, Vol. XI, No. 11, 27 July 1979.

comprehensively beaten in every non-Dagomba constituency. In some cases it came last or virtually last of all the contending parties. For example, it was defeated in Gonja East by every party, and polled only 2.7 per cent of the total votes cast. These results suggest that the SDF did not have a sound base in the Northern Region as a whole, but was strong instead only in areas where Yendi 'skin' politics was predominant: it won only in traditionally strong Andani areas. The PFP's success in three predominantly strong Abudulai constituencies while losing in Andani dominated ones, suggests also that this party was supported in Dagbon by people who looked upon it to protect their particular gate interests. The PFP's victory in Chereponi-Saboba (a non-Dagomba area) together with its overall good performance in other (i.e. non-Dagomba) parts of the region where it came second to the PNP, suggests further that its appeal in the North went beyond gate considerations.

How did the rice farmers' support for the individual parties compare with that of the electorate as a whole? According to Table 9.2 (a-d), during the first round parliamentary elections party preferences of large and small rice farmers were distributed very similarly to those of the electorate as a whole. In other words, the 'interests' of Dagomba farmers corresponded with those of other groups within the community. In Tamale, for example, the PFP was supported by 31.6 per cent of the electorate, while our sample showed that it won the support of 35.3 per cent of the big rice farmers and 32.5 per cent of the small ones. Similarly, the SDF won 50.7 per cent of the votes cast in Tamale, compared with 44.1 per cent of the big farmers and 45 per cent of the small rice farmers in our sample. The PNP on the other hand, won only 8.4 per cent of the votes cast in this constituency, while, according to our survey, it gained the support of 11.8 per cent of the big rice farmers and 12.5 per cent of the small rice farmers.

TABLE 9.2: Comparison of Rice Farmers' and Electorate Party Preferences during the 1979 Parliamentary Elections

(a) Tamale

Party	Electorate	%	Big Rice Farmers	%	Small Rice Farmers	%
SDF	11,853	50.7	15	44.1	18	45.0
PFP	7,393	31.6	12	35.3	13	32.5
ACP	514	2.2	-	-	2	5.0
UNC	1,285	5.5	3	8.8	2	5.0
TFP	387	1.6	-	-	-	-
PNP	1,967	8.4	4	11.8	5	12.5
Total	23,399	100.0	34	100.0	40	100.0

(b) Yendi

Party	Electorate	%	Big Rice Farmers	%	Small Rice Farmers	%
SDF	3,787	31.7	13	43.3	12	30.0
PFP	6,103	51.0	16	53.3	23	57.5
ACP	271	2.3	-	-	-	-
UNC	570	4.8	1	3.3	2	5.0
TFP	366	3.0	-	-	-	-
PNP	856	7.2	-	-	3	7.5
Total	11,953	100.0	30	100.0	40	100.0

## (c) Tolon

Party	Electorate	%	Big Rice Farmers	%	Small Rice Farmers	%
SDF	4,475	40.9	7	29.2	11	36.7
PFP	5,801	53.0	15	62.5	15	50.0
ACP	123	1.1	-	-	-	-
UNC	132	1.2	-	-	1	3.3
TFP	171	1.6	-	-	-	-
PNP	246	2.2	2	8.3	3	10.0
Total	10,948	100.0	24	100.0	30	100.0

## (d) Savelugu

Party	Electorate	%	Big Rice Farmers	%	Small Rice Farmers	%
SDF	4,146	52.9	22	55.0	26	52.0
PFP	2,769	35.4	16	40.0	21	42.0
ACP	N/C	-	-	-	-	-
UNC	264	3.4	-	-	1	2.0
TFP	269	3.4	-	-	-	-
PNP	384	4.9	2	5.0	2	4.0
Total	7,832	100.0	40	100.0	50	100.0

Source: Electoral Survey of Rice Farmers, Northern Ghana, 1979  
and Legon Observer, op. cit.

These findings are all the more interesting since the PNP was one of the few contending parties which claimed to have had a policy for the development of agriculture in the country, including the North. According to the party's manifesto, its policy was "to promote the agricultural revolution which shall be the bedrock of Ghana's scientifical (sic), technological, and industrial advancement".<sup>24</sup> The other parties were no more explicit in their formulation of agricultural policies. The UNC simply recognised the need to "pay particular attention to the development of the rural areas".<sup>25</sup> As far as the ACP was concerned, agriculture was simply the basis of its promised policies. The SDF, comprising in its leadership the largest and most influential rice farmers in the North, was perhaps the most disappointing as far as the formulation of an agricultural policy was concerned. The party made hardly any references to agricultural policy beyond simply recognising agriculture as one of its highest priorities. The only sense in which the party can be said to have represented farmers' interests was that farmers constituted most of its supporters.

The excessively vague and imprecise nature of the agricultural 'policies' proposed by the various parties was not acceptable to the rice farmers in the North, and made no impression upon them. Such policies could not, therefore, have influenced their support for one party over another. Our findings suggest that as far as Dagomba rice farmers were concerned, they did not consider occupational class as taking precedence over gate issues.

The continuing significance of traditional political and factional allegiances in elections in Northern Ghana has been noted by several scholars. Dennis Austin, writing about the impact of the 1956 elections in the North, observed that these constituencies were split along chieftaincy lines. He wrote thus:

The great national issues of Federation or unitary government, the reform of the Cocoa Purchasing Company, the cocoa price and the moral issues raised by Busia and Gbedemah, were reduced to a simple struggle between rival chiefdoms for control of their own area. This did not mean, however, that the election was meaningless in local terms, or that it was any the less strongly fought. On the contrary the struggle raged furiously throughout the constituency.<sup>26</sup>

Nor was the influence of chieftaincy politics on elections confined to the North. More generally, parties have in the past tended to exploit the relative weakness or insecurity of certain chieftaincy factions by promising support and protection if they accede to power. As Dunn and Robertson have observed in Ahafo, the CPP interfered in local chieftaincy by installing or reinstating certain chiefs in return for their electoral support.<sup>27</sup> But the supremacy of this issue in Northern Ghana, and Dagbon especially, is somewhat exceptional. Chieftaincy is the axis upon which Dagomba society is structured, and social mobility is influenced by one's relationship to the ruling gate. As one Abudulai supporter explained, he voted PFP on the grounds that if this party was returned to power it would have reinstated Mahamadu Abudulai and restored a sense of pride "in the hearts of Abudulais". Furthermore, he argued, "tradition has to be respected, and Dagbon has to be governed according to Dagomba constitution. This means more to us Dagombas than all party manifestos put together."<sup>28</sup> These views suggest a strong sense of commitment to the Dagomba as a whole (or at least to talking in such terms) despite the intense competition between the two gates.

#### The Presidential Elections, Rice Farmers, and Support for Candidates

The predominance of local chieftaincy as an important election issue was never demonstrated better than in the second round presidential elections. During the first round of the elections, supporters of the two leading parties in Dagbon, the SDF and PFP, voted for candidates

whose parties represented their side's particular interests. Thus Abudulai supporters voted for Victor Owusu of the PFP, while Andani followers voted for Ibrahim Mahama of the SDF. Since, however, there was no outright winner in the first round, a re-run was necessary as stipulated by the Constitution, and was contested by the two national front-runners, Hilla Limann and Victor Owusu.

As far as the finalists were concerned, Limann made important gains in several constituencies during the second round, even in areas that were previously considered 'safe' by SDF or PFP standards. On the other hand, Owusu's gains were mainly marginal. Table 9.3 below gives comparative figures for the first and second round presidential elections. It indicates quite clearly that the PNP candidate made significant (and in the end decisive) gains in all constituencies, while PFP gains were simply moderate. During the first round (which was of course contested by the SDF) Owusu had beaten Limann in seven of the Northern Regional constituencies (even though his party won only 4 seats), all of them in areas where Dagomba traditional politics played an important role in the every day lives of the people. In nearly all of these, Owusu's victory was conclusive. Those constituencies that were won by Limann during the first round were in areas where Dagomba chieftaincy politics was of no consequence, such as the Gonja and Mamprusi.

The second round elections, however, saw a complete reversal of the pattern of support for the candidates as the scales were turned completely against the PFP. Limann won 12 of the 14 constituencies, including some relatively strong SDF areas like Savelugu, Mion-Nanton, and Tamale. The only two constituencies won by Owusu during this round were Tolon and Yendi - two exceptionally strong Abudulai seats. While Limann nearly trebled his support in the Northern Region during the second round (from 39,640 votes in the first round to 105,881 in the second), Owusu on the

TABLE 9.3: Comparison of First and Second Round Presidential Elections (Northern Region) 1979.

Constituency	PNP - Limann		PFP - Owusu		Votes Cast		Winner
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	
Tamale (D)	1,967	12,321	7,393	7,849	23,399	20,170	PNP
Tolon (D)	246	4,630	5,801	6,861	10,948	11,491	PFP
Walewale	6,405	16,182	1,479	865	8,832	17,047	PNP
Nalerigu	4,948	10,192	1,425	1,833	7,785	12,025	PNP
Bunkpurugu	2,847	5,559	1,734	3,821	5,790	9,380	PNP
Nanumba	4,063	8,549	2,381	3,027	10,695	11,576	PNP
Gushiegu (D)	1,348	5,132	2,757	4,036	7,085	9,168	PNP
Savelugu (D)	384	3,850	2,769	3,006	7,832	6,856	PNP
Mion-Nanton (D)	353	4,545	1,994	3,264	7,845	7,809	PNP
Chereponi-Saboba	2,387	4,657	2,627	2,988	7,153	7,645	PNP
Yendi (D)	856	5,424	6,103	6,900	11,953	12,324	PFP
Gonja West	4,840	7,496	3,178	3,683	11,802	11,179	PNP
Gonja Central	4,856	11,405	3,131	3,294	12,224	14,699	PNP
Gonja East	4,140	5,939	2,371	2,606	9,420	8,545	PNP
Total	39,640	105,881	45,143	54,033	142,763	159,914	

Note: (1) = First Round  
(2) = Second Round  
(D) = Dagomba

Source: Adapted from Legon Observer, *op. cit.*

other hand, increased his only marginally (from 45,143 in the first to 54,033 in the second). Indications are that Limann made important gains right across the board, and it would appear that most voters who had earlier supported other parties switched over to the PNP candidate in the crucial second round.

Our electoral survey of rice farmers in Dagbon also indicated a large swing towards Limann among these farmers. Most of the gains achieved by Limann were the result of a mass swing of SDF votes to this candidate. As we have already seen from the results of our survey of rice farmers during the parliamentary elections, the contest between the SDF and PFP had been very close, with the PNP running well behind in third place. In the final contest, however, the PFP candidate failed to make any impact upon farmers who were not supporters of the Abudulai faction as indicated by our survey. Limann won every constituency in Dagbon. But Limann could not conceivably have won any of the Dagbon constituencies without the full backing of SDF supporters. The swing to the PNP candidate from SDF supporters among the rice farmers was decisive, as we shall see from Table 9.4 (a-d). As far as Limann was concerned, 68 per cent of his support among big rice farmers in Tamale originated from SDF/Andani supporters, while 65 per cent of such support came from small rice farmers of the same source. The swing of SDF/Andani votes towards Limann among the rice farmers assumed relatively high proportions in all constituencies covered by our survey, and was probably similar to the general pattern in Dagbon.

What then were the reasons determining the level of SDF support for Limann of the PNP in the final rounds of the presidential elections? The reasons that determined the level of political support for Limann were basically the same for both big and small rice farmers, as indeed for other sections of the population. SDF supporters had never

TABLE 9.4: Shift in Large/Small Rice Farmers' Support for Finalist Candidates in Second Round Presidential Elections, 1979.

## (a) Tamale

Source	Big Rice Farmers				Small Rice Farmers			
	Limann	Owusu	N/V	Total	Limann	Owusu	N/V	Total
SDF	13	-	2	15	13	-	5	18
PFP	-	12	-	12	-	11	2	13
ACP	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2
UNC	2	-	1	3	1	-	1	2
TFP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PNP	4	-	-	4	5	-	-	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>40</b>

## (b) Yendi

Source	Big Rice Farmers				Small Rice Farmers			
	Limann	Owusu	N/V	Total	Limann	Owusu	N/V	Total
SDF	11	-	2	13	10	-	2	12
PFP	-	16	-	16	-	22	1	23
ACP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UNC	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	2
TFP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PNP	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40</b>

## (c) Tolon

Source	Big Rice Farmers				Small Rice Farmers			
	Limann	Owusu	N/V	Total	Limann	Owusu	N/V	Total
SDF	6	-	1	7	9	-	2	11
PFP	-	15	-	15	-	15	-	15
ACP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UNC	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	1
TFP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PNP	2	-	-	2	3	-	-	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>30</b>

## (d) Savelugu

Source	Big Rice Farmers				Small Rice Farmers			
	Limann	Owusu	N/V	Total	Limann	Owusu	N/V	Total
SDF	17	-	5	22	21	-	5	26
PFP	-	15	1	16	-	21	-	21
ACP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UNC	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
TFP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PNP	2	-	-	2	2	-	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>50</b>

Note: N/V = Non-voters.

Source: Electoral Survey of Rice Farmers, N/G, 1979.

considered their position as one against the PNP, at least as far as gate issues were concerned. The PNP was expected to take a neutral stand on this matter which, basically, was the position it adopted, so that when the SDF ceased to be in the running its supporters (or most of them anyway) gave their support to the PNP candidate. On the other hand, the PFP, as champions of the Abudulais, had indeed posed a serious threat to SDF/Andani interests. As one SDF supporter and rice farmer from Savelugu bluntly stated, when their party lost the presidential race in the first round, the issue became a straightforward fight between two parties:

All of us SDF supporters knew where the PFP stood. Our people were told to vote Limann because we wanted Victor Owusu out at all cost. Furthermore, Limann was a northerner, and he would be in a better position to understand the problems confronting our people up here. 29

It was evident from the several interviews and informal discussions held with SDF supporters that chieftaincy was the crucial determinant in their final decision to rally behind Limann. Even the SDF leader himself conceded that the majority of Andani supporters voted for Limann because they were absolutely clear about the "issues" involved. According to him, no directive was issued to supporters ordering them to vote one way or another; it was a "natural inclination guided by their concern to preserve the customs" which encouraged most SDF supporters to vote for Limann rather than Owusu in the crucial second round.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the PNP had been regarded by Andani supporters as being somewhat compatible (ideologically) with the former CPP which had apparently tried to bring some order into the selection of the Ya-Na,<sup>31</sup> so that it was very likely that SDF/Andani followers would back Limann in an attempt to keep out the candidate whose party was considered as being representative of rival interests. From the Andanis' point of view Limann at least represented a neutral position. In any case,

the PNP had reinforced its position on the issue by pledging its respect for tradition and for non-interference in local chieftaincy matters.<sup>32</sup> In the light of such evidence the Andanis regarded the PNP (and Limann) as the party better suited to preserve the status quo, i.e. Andani interests in Dagbon.

The support for Limann among Andani followers was further influenced by circulating rumours within Andani circles that the Akuffo regime had been secretly planning the removal of Ya Na Yakubu Andani from the Yendi paramountcy some time in June, but the plot failed as a result of Rawlings' June 4th 'revolution'.<sup>33</sup> If these rumours had any political effect it was to consolidate SDF support for Limann. As one SDF supporter put it,

... we knew that the Abudulai people had petitioned the government and that they were planning to sack Na Yakubu from the palace (Yendi). But Rawlings came at the right time, so that spoilt everything ... If PFP had won, there is no doubt that they (the Abudulais) would have petitioned the government again, and this time for sure they would remove the chief. Our people would not agree, so that's why we voted Limann.<sup>34</sup>

To sum up, therefore, the initial uncertainties caused among the prominent rice farmers by the fall of the Acheampong regime did not lead, as one might have expected, to these farmers forming a political party or joining in alliance with some such party on the basis of their rice farming interests, and with a view to consolidating their class position. Rice farming did not count as a special interest, and Dagomba rice farmers' support for one party or another corresponded to that of the rest of the community.

There were no parties formed with the specific purpose of giving representation to the interests of farmers either in the North or in the country generally. Any such statements on agricultural policy as formulated by some parties were vague and imprecise, and could not hope to win support among farmers on the basis of such formulations. Even

if, however, there was a party representative of the farming interest, it was extremely unlikely that any such party would have made a significant impact upon these farmers, since political behaviour among the Dagomba was influenced by gate loyalties which counted for much more than occupational class based, for example, upon rice farming. Chieftaincy in Dagbon cut across all class barriers, and was the axis upon which Dagomba society was structured.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. Such views were expressed by several prominent Abudulai supporters in Dagbon such as chiefs and politicians, including the optimistic B.A. Yakubu who saw "a real possibility of ending the injustices perpetrated by soldiers and Acheampong in particular here in our traditional state".  
Interview with B.A. Yakubu, Tamale, 2 August 1978.
2. Lt. General Hamidu is the son of the Sunson Na, a senior chief in Dagbon. Hamidu was known for his ideological differences with Acheampong and for which he was (conveniently) posted on diplomatic service to Zambia.
3. Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Abudulai, Tamale, 10 July 1978.
4. Ibid.
5. I was given access to a personal letter signed by the Border Guard Commander and addressed to an influential Upper Regional farmer and businessman in February 1978, which explained that he (the Border Guard Commander) had done all in his power to assist this farmer in the transfer of certain "food items" to Upper Volta. The "food items" involved were about 280 bags of rice, 40 bags of corn, and a "small quantity" of millet, all of which were despatched, according to my informant, without any problems.  
Personal files and interview with prominent Bolgatanga farmer, 11 October 1978.
6. Discussion with Border Guard Officer, Border Guard Office, Kanvilli (Tamale), 31 August 1979.
7. Interview with Alhaji Sumani Zakaria, Tamale, 30 April 1978.
8. Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama, Tamale, 21 September 1978.
9. Daily Graphic, 1 August 1978.
10. Ibid.
11. The Ghana Bar Association: "The Kumasi Declaration of 1978 on Political and Constitutional Affairs", Kumasi, 23 September 1978.
12. It was widely believed that under Unigov General Acheampong would be appointed President, through which continuity with the former regime would be maintained. Under such a system the relationship between the prominent rice farmers and the government would therefore remain intact.
13. Interview with S.Y. Imoru, RGA Executive member, Tamale, 10 August 1978.
14. It is a well known story in Tamale that Zakaria, who was only a driver at the Regional Office, developed a close relationship with his boss, Colonel Zumah, the Regional Commissioner. According to that story, the RC used his office and influence to obtain resources, especially farm machinery, which he left in the care of

Zakaria who was farming for him. When Zumah left the region he tried to retrieve his "property" but as the story goes, he was threatened with blackmail by Zakaria. Despite its popularity in local circles, this story does not appear to be any more plausible than Zakaria's own account that he started small and gradually built his way up with the help of a "friendly" Bank Manager.

15. In November 1978 the government declared a State of Emergency for the purpose of ensuring the maintenance of essential services. Its main objective was to force profiteers and traders to release hoarded commodities to members of the public at government "controlled" prices. The military and police were given special powers to search property and seize all hoarded goods which were subsequently sold to the public, and the proceeds paid into government coffers. The State of Emergency was revoked on 31 December 1978.
16. Akuffo's reluctance to bring the former Head of State, Acheampong, to trial after he was officially pronounced guilty of corruption and general maladministration, was interpreted in many circles as a deliberate act to conceal the corruption of senior officers, including several members of the Akuffo regime.
17. Personal correspondence from Alhaji Abudulai Tanko, Tamale, dated 9 February 1979.
18. The governing clause in the Political Parties Decree (1978) stated that no political party would be registered unless at least one founding member of this party was ordinarily resident or registered as a voter in each District Council area. Furthermore, the Decree required that no more than nine of the founding members of a political party shall belong to any one particular tribe.
19. Interview with Ibrahim Mahama, Tamale, 10 July 1979.
20. Interview with Abudulai Yakubu, Secretary to Gulkpe Na, Tamale, 3 August 1979.
21. Informal interview with a small group (7) of Andani supporters in Yendi, 8 July 1978.
22. R. Jeffries, "The Ghanaian Elections of 1979", African Affairs, Vol. 79, No. 316, July 1980.
23. Under the Elections and Public Offices Disqualifications (Disqualified Persons) Decree 1976, 105 people were disqualified from holding office, based on the findings of various enquiries: Taylor and Aidoo Assets Committee, the KOM Commission of Enquiry into the Builders Brigade, the Jiagge Manyo-Plange and Sowah Assets Commissions, and the Kwame Nkrumah Properties Commission. According to the Sowah Assets Commission, Egala was found to have "excess expenditures" of £15,418.
24. PNP Manifesto, published in Daily Graphic, 17 January 1979.

25. UNC Chairman and leader, W. Offori-Attah; quoted in the Ghanaian Times, 12 February 1979.
26. Dennis Austin, Politics in Ghana, 1946-1960, (Oxford 1970) pp. 359-360.
27. J. Dunn and A.F. Robertson, Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Ahafo, Cambridge 1973, pp. 251-256.
28. Interview with Alhassan Yahaya, rice farmer and teacher, Yendi, 8 July 1978.
29. Interview with Iddrissu Osuman, Savelugu, 11 July 1979.
30. Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama, Tamale, 22 August 1979.
31. The Legislative Instrument (L.1.59) introduced by Nkrumah to regulate the selection of the Ya Na was accepted initially by the Andanis and was regarded as a compromise as far as the selection of the Ya Na was concerned.
32. Interview with Iddrisu Abu, PNP parliamentary candidate for Tamale, 12 August 1979. Abu believed that the party would have to resist any temptation to favour any one group if it were to gain the confidence of Dagombas. The old biases, he claimed, had to be buried once and for all. A measure of PNP tolerance by supporters of the SDF was indicated by the "crossing over" of several former SDF members to the PNP ranks, including a leading SDF member, Alhaji Ibrahim Yahaya (Kukuo Na) in January 1980. Yahaya justified his move by claiming that they (the SDF leadership) were all members of the CPP, and therefore their place was with the PNP. Reported in West Africa, 21 January 1980.
33. Such rumours were never confirmed, and every attempt which I made to get "reliable" information from the Northern Regional House of Chiefs proved futile. The ex-Sang-lana, however, admitted afterwards that "certain forces" had been at work which "might" have reversed certain decisions taken against them (the Abudulais), but the events of 4th June had time to intervene.
34. Informal discussion, Baba Abudulai Yakubu, Tamale, 27 August 1979.

### CONCLUSION

By 1979 rice production in Ghana had failed to make the desired impact upon the economy. Ghana was not only failing to earn the expected foreign exchange as originally envisaged by the planners of the OFY programme; she was not even able to meet the needs of the domestic market. A large proportion of the rice produced was smuggled because of the low official prices paid to producers in comparison with the 'real' market price. Farmers preferred to sell their rice in neighbouring states for prices several times above the official government price, while at the same time earning valuable foreign currency.

By the end of the 1979/80 farming season only 21,000 metric tons were (officially) produced, and the gap between production and consumption was a staggering 79,000 metric tons. The shortages were met by imports or food 'aid' grants. In 1980 Ghana borrowed £ 12.7 million from the United States to buy food, including rice, maize and wheat, while Japan was making vast contributions towards the country's food needs.<sup>1</sup> It was apparent that Ghana was depending more and more upon foreign aid to solve its food problem, and that the agricultural programme initiated in 1972 had failed in its major objective of making the country self-sufficient in food.

The SMC's agricultural programme, especially rice production, failed because the government did not provide high enough incentives in the form of better minimum guaranteed prices for these farmers' produce. It was only those farmers who smuggled rice or sold it on the black market who gained financially from its production. Small farmers on the other hand were systematically denied access to subsidised capital (loans) and other farming inputs. The government's

policies encouraged the well-connected farmers to expand farm size by using subsidised, capital intensive and labour-saving production practices. The resulting artificially high incomes provided incentives for those privileged farmers to adopt production practices which were financially profitable but uneconomic from the national point of view. Furthermore, most of those participating in large-scale rice production were relatively inexperienced farmers who nevertheless gained access to important inputs which might otherwise have been better utilised by the smaller, more experienced, and generally more efficient, small farmers.

Winch has argued that, in view of its high economic cost, large-scale rice production should be drastically curtailed to about two hundred such farms, while the bulk of production should be entrusted to the smaller and more economical enterprises. According to Winch, small-scale production would generate more employment, improve income distribution and require less foreign exchange and input subsidy support.<sup>2</sup>

While such arguments made economic sense, they did not appeal politically to the Acheampong regime, which had a vested interest in large-scale rice production in the North. In the first place, the prominent rice farmers in the North formed a powerful and influential class which was instrumental in winning political support for the regime locally. Secondly, many high-level government officials, including commissioners and the Head of State himself, engaged in large-scale rice farming in the North. And finally, the administration of agricultural aid projects by government appointees was a further means by which these officials accumulated financial benefits through diverting funds which were intended for the region to themselves and their allies. Through such a system of patronage the government was able to support indirectly its most important local allies.

Thus a regime committed to keeping itself in power at any cost could not hope to alter its strategy for agricultural development in the North without drastically altering the structure of its local political base. The Acheampong regime did not choose to appeal directly to the local masses but rather through their appointed leaders. Appealing to the masses directly would have cost the government comparatively large sums in the form of economic assistance, and what was available would not have been enough to go round. It was therefore much more convenient and cheaper to appeal for local support via big farmers representing the ruling chiefly dynasty with whom the regime had already established a patron/client relationship. Moreover, the structure of local traditional society made it easier for the regime to appeal for the support of the ordinary people via influential clients. The Acheampong government was not the first to recruit political support through its 'alliance' with a local chieftaincy faction; every regime before this, including the earliest colonial ones, appealed to the Northern people through their chiefs.

The Acheampong/Andani alliance in the North gave rise to the development of a class of rich and politically very influential rice farmers there. These farmers were nearly all either members or prominent supporters of the ruling Andani faction. They had access to all local institutions, whether or not these were connected with farming, but their real power base was the rice farmers' association, the RGA. Their influence extended well beyond the boundaries of the North. They depended heavily upon their connections with high level officials in Accra as well as the regional centres to obtain facilities such as cheap loans, machinery and even import licences. In return for such privileges the farmers acted as agents for recruiting political support for the regime, especially during the referendum on

Union Government. By 1978, these rice farmers had come to be regarded as local ambassadors of the regime in Accra, while the RGA was officially regarded as an organ or instrument of government policy.

Despite being relatively underprivileged, the rival Abudulai faction possessed its own group of large-scale rice farmers and its own patronage networks through which members or supporters received assistance. Of course there was an important difference in the level of assistance received by members. The amount of assistance available to Abudulai supporters via Abudulai patron-client networks was strictly limited, since these did not have the necessary connections to exploit resources. They were institutionally opposed to the Acheampong regime and as such were denied access to sources of economic aid. Nevertheless, there still remained a clearly defined pattern of relationships within this group of big rice farmers, and between these and their smaller followers.

Such a parallel development of group relationships might at first give the impression of the existence of two parallel sections of a single class of large-scale rice farmers in Dagbon. This, in effect, was not the case. Each group rather sought to develop its broad gate interests rather than its occupational class interests, i.e. as large-scale, 'capitalist' rice farmers. As far as these Dagomba farmers were concerned, class interests were synonymous with gate interests.

The concepts of class consciousness and class conflict become problematic when applied in the context of African societies with their vastly complicated social systems. Objectively, Africans belong to one social class or another; but as we have seen with the example of the Dagombas of Northern Ghana, social change was not likely to be initiated as a result of conflict between two objective social classes based on their relationship to the means of production, in this case

between deprived, small farmers on the one hand, and the big, eminently privileged ones on the other. While small farmers expressed genuine discontent about the way their prominent counterparts appropriated government aid which was earmarked for farmers as a whole, they were not prepared to take a 'position' against such farmers if these were members or supporters of their own gate. As we have seen during the elections of 1979, Dagomba farmers did not vote according to occupational class interest, but rather according to chieftaincy allegiance. Again, as we observed, such voting behaviour was similar to that of the Dagomba electorate as a whole, thus reinforcing our claim that chieftaincy in Dagomba society is the axis upon which this society is structured, and therefore predominates over all other issues.

As far as the Abudulai farmers (large and small) were concerned, change in Dagbon would come only when the Andani-dominated power structure was destroyed. Through this process their own gate would be restored to power, and all Abudulai farmers would benefit through this gate's newly found status.

One of the most distinctive features of the class of large-scale rice farmers that developed in the North during the 1970s was its decided lack of 'permanence'. It did not emerge out of capitalism based on accumulation, but owed its existence instead to its sponsorship by the Acheampong regime. Once this regime was overthrown, the position of the big rice farmers became vulnerable and uncertain.

• Their vulnerability became even more perilous under Rawlings' AFRC which overthrew the remaining vestiges of the SMC regime on 4th June 1979. Several of the big farmers fled the country in the wake of this regime's violently aggressive policies towards all those which it considered to have contributed to the devastation of the economy through profiteering and other malpractices. The big rice farmers were

considered among the main transgressors.

The sponsorship by the State of a class of large-scale rice farmers in Northern Ghana did not produce any significant benefits to the Ghanaian economy as a whole, nor to the Northern rural economy. The government's agricultural development programme did not succeed in generating employment or improving income as far as small rice farmers were concerned. It rather structured the local economy in such a fashion that the only beneficiaries were the regime's own leading members and their local clients.

#### Alternative Strategies

What alternative policies or approaches were required in order to improve economic development, more specifically agricultural production, in Dagbon? Most authors have pointed to the need for alternative economic policies rather than changes in local political structures. Bates, for example, suggests that a positive pricing policy is the basis for a solution to the problems facing agricultural development not only in Ghana, but in Africa as a whole. He argues that in Africa prices are set in a way which favours the interests of industry but which at the same time is harmful to those of agriculture.<sup>3</sup> The reasons, according to Bates, for the pursuit of such policy are both economic and political. Because of the size distribution of their industry, i.e. a small number of firms with a large output and consequently a propensity to lobby for higher prices, producers tend to exert greater pressure on the government than does agriculture with a very large number of small producers who each contribute only a small amount to total output. Bates notes that governments in African states also tend to regard industrialisation as being synonymous with development, with the result that this sector is generally financed with appropriated resources from export agriculture.<sup>4</sup>

He claims furthermore that the use of subsidies rather than market prices tends to favour large farmers. The large farmers, as the rice industry in Ghana illustrates, also had the ability to act collectively in defence of their interests.<sup>5</sup> Small farmers, by contrast, are numerous and scattered, and produce only a small volume of total output. Thus, efforts to organise in support of higher prices tend to be more costly in the small farm community and to offer fewer private advantages.<sup>6</sup> This leads Bates to the conclusion that the interests of large and small farmers are often in conflict, especially in situations where the government resorts to subsidies rather than market prices: the gains secured by one are often at the expense of the other.<sup>7</sup>

Shepherd argues that the problem of agricultural development in Ghana rests on the misguided investment policies of the government. According to him, emphasis was placed on urban development rather than peasant agriculture: a policy that was largely responsible for the extreme food shortages in the north of Ghana, but more especially the North-East, during 1977.<sup>8</sup> This approach did not only reflect a regional policy, but was part of the government's national development policy which in turn reflected state bias in urban and industrial spending as well as "the distribution of power in Ghanaian society".<sup>9</sup> The growing emphasis on urban and industrial development at the expense of small-scale agriculture is not a characteristic feature of development strategy in Ghana only. The tendency of African governments to adopt national economic policies which favour urban groups on the whole has been noted by several other authors<sup>10</sup> including Bates, who concludes that agricultural policy has become a "by-product of political relations between governments and their urban constituents".<sup>11</sup>

The poor state of agriculture as regards the north of Ghana in particular is attributed by Shepherd to the historical factor. The area has been neglected partly because of the colonial government's policy of

"separate development" and its administration of the North as a labour reserve, and "partly because the northern economy has been developed since the war to suit the interests of dominant urban groups in Ghana".<sup>12</sup> The failure of the colonial regime to introduce economic development in the North was highlighted in Chapter Two. The North was never incorporated in a constructive national development plan despite official statements to the contrary. During the colonial period, as we have already demonstrated, it was assigned the role of supplier of foodstuffs to the South, in addition to that of labour reserve as a whole. The post-colonial period brought no significant changes in policy or approach, and no serious consideration was given to the need to provide the area with a viable export economy, nor an infrastructure upon which such an economy could be later built. Economic development in the North has been organised around piecemeal or uncoordinating projects which, because of their nature, succeeded only in alienating the small farmers for whom they were designed.

The development of commercial rice farming in Dagbon was not really part of a comprehensive regional economic programme. It was simply a policy designed to enrich local supporters of the regime, i.e. those with political connections which made it possible to obtain cheap (subsidised) inputs and to smuggle most of their produce. All of the smuggled rice was of course sold for convertible foreign exchange.

The setting up of a rice industry did not coincide with a programme of infrastructural development, such as the construction of feeder roads, irrigation schemes, road transport, or a repair and maintenance service which would serve both the needs of farmers and those of the people more generally. Although it would have benefited the Dagomba people in the long-run, such an investment programme did not appeal to the Acheampong regime, since it did not meet its instrumental and more immediate needs.

Whatever funds were available were used to finance short-term policies such as obtaining subsidised inputs - farm machinery, fertilizers, loans - for use by the big-farmer allies of the regime. The huge profits which these farmers realised as a result of such privileges were from their personal point of view far more important than any long-term capital investment in the area. These farmers also placed much more emphasis on rice farming as an instrumental activity, i.e. as a means of making quick money, rather than as investment. As far as they were concerned, once rice farming ceased to be profitable they would return to their 'normal' (previous) business or occupation, leaving behind them in the process large tracks of barren land. By 1978/79, there was already widespread indication of this happening as several big farmers expressed their intention to quit rice farming altogether after a few "good harvests", while a few others had actually "retired" by 1979. It should be noted that while such attitudes were prevalent among "stranger" farmers, it was also common among several Dagomba farmers who expressed the opinion that they did not wish to spend all their lives on the farm.

The participation of big rice farmers in agricultural development in Dagbon was, generally speaking, a temporary phenomenon, and can only have helped to illustrate the misconceived role which large farmers as a group were supposed to have played in economic development in the North as a whole. By 1982, when the majority of the big rice farmers in Dagbon (and in other parts of the North) started to abandon their farms ostensibly because of operational problems, such as the shortage of farming inputs, but in practice because of political pressure from local PNDC activists, the people did not inherit from these an infrastructure or foundation on which they could develop further. What they appeared to have inherited was a disorganised, uncoordinated framework of a mismanaged rural economy. As my correspondent explained:

"Nearly all the big farmers from Tamale have run away since December 31st.<sup>13</sup> The pressure was too much on them. Their farms have been abandoned, and some of them even did not have time to harvest their rice. The local WDCs (Workers' Defence Councils)<sup>14</sup> have even tried to cultivate some of these farms but have been defeated by the usual problems of roads, transport and fuel, not to mention the shortage of food ... These days one cannot find rice in the market, only from the (market) women. It would be hard for a newcomer to this town to accept that the North here was once a prosperous rice farming community ... "15

The phenomenon of commercial rice farming in Dagbon certainly gave an illusion of prosperity, but it was a prosperity shared only by the few and privileged big rice farmers with political connections. It did not reflect any tangible improvement in the socio-economic position of small farmers or of the Dagomba as a whole. Thus Acheampong's OFY policy cannot be conceived of as a comprehensive programme of economic development, at least as far as Dagbon was concerned.

The need to invest in capital intensive projects in West Africa as a means of increasing agricultural productivity has been advanced by some. Hart, for example, argues that the reason why such projects have failed in West Africa is mainly because of these governments' lack of concern about technical efficiency. Such projects are regarded mainly as prestigious or instrumental: a means of personal enrichment and of keeping "a loyal cadre of followers employed".<sup>16</sup> According to Hart, this sector has been able to generate some wealth partly because of the "massive commitment" of agricultural labour to export agriculture, and partly because of the fertility of an abundant virgin land area, rather than the improved productivity of labour.<sup>17</sup> The state, he correctly argues, has appropriated most of the surplus for its own unproductive expenditures, such as industrial financing, and which represents a wrong order of priorities.<sup>18</sup>

Development policy must be geared towards raising agricultural productivity as opposed to industrial output. This leads to the

conclusion by Hart that only "when an agrarian revolution has set resources free for industrial development will it then be necessary to talk about an industrial revolution".<sup>19</sup> One of Hart's main recommendations for achieving economic development, and more especially agricultural output, is for West African states to "recapitulate" the stages of economic development which all industrialised countries have so far passed.<sup>20</sup>

While such arguments on the need to give priority to agricultural development are basically sound, Hart's assertions as regards the need for West African states to adopt capitalist strategies as a means of improving agricultural productivity are somewhat more debatable. The introduction of large-scale capitalist rice farming in Northern Ghana in general and in Dagbon more especially, which utilised a generous system of input-subsidy, demonstrated quite clearly that without constructive government economic policies such enterprises could be established only at a great cost to the state. Furthermore, as we have seen, only farmers with connections can hope to benefit from such policies. The majority of the rural populace, including small farmers, did not benefit from such policies. Thus, rather than restructuring the local economy for the benefit of the people as a whole, state-subsidised capitalist rice farming succeeded only in enriching a rural elite and, as such, cannot be considered as an effective strategy or model for economic development, at least as far as Ghana is concerned.

More generally, the call for capitalist strategies in agricultural development also represents a lack of confidence in small-scale agricultural systems such as farmers' co-operatives, and in the ability of peasants to increase agricultural output. Given constructive economic policies which include sufficient price incentives, it is of course possible to inspire small farmers and to increase productivity. Prior to the expansion of commercial rice farming in Dagbon and its domination

by large-scale farmers, most of the rice there was produced by small farmers' co-operatives. These small enterprises were effectively phased out only when Acheampong's biased agricultural policies took effect about 1972/73. The policies of Rawlings' PNDC regime have also demonstrated, though admittedly to a limited extent, that small-scale agriculture can increase productivity (and profitability) if dictated by sound economic policies such as price incentives, a realistic rate of exchange, and a system of price control.

#### Bureaucracy and Agricultural Development in Dagbon

Acheampong's approach to development in the North as a whole was to set up an elaborate bureaucratic machinery for administering local projects, but which was used in effect to further the interests of the regime locally. The bureaucracy was part of a network system through which he provided his local followers with substantial economic benefits and a local political platform. We have already seen that a number of development projects were set up in the North including Dagbon, and most of which were concerned with the improvement of commercial cash-cropping, especially rice. The two main projects in the North were the GGADP in the Northern Region and URADEP in the Upper Region. Most of these projects failed to make any impact upon agricultural production, with the single exception of the GGADP. They were manned by administrators who did not only fail to take into account the needs of small farmers for whom these projects were originally set up, but who used their position instead to direct funds and resources for their own private use or for those of their allies.

The implementation during the seventies of the government's agricultural policies in Dagbon raises a very important issue as regards the administration of aid programmes and of agricultural projects more particularly. For example, should the running of such programmes be

entrusted to Ghanaian officials who, because of their political relationship to the regime, were not made accountable for the performance of projects? The insensitive and generally irresponsible attitude of project administrators in regard to the needs of small farmers suggests the need in future for an alternative system of project management, if such projects are to make any useful impact upon economic development locally. Their management must be restructured to include small farmers or their nominees.

The involvement of small farmers or their representatives with the management of projects does not necessarily constitute an attempt to eliminate bureaucracy, but rather a means of democratising it through their participation in the day-to-day running of such programmes. In Dagbon, as with African societies more generally, there was a tendency to disparage at the leadership abilities of the small farmer. Such bias was expressed not only by project managers and those other officials involved with agricultural development in Dagbon, but also by most big farmers who perceived of these people as being "backward" and unadaptable to change. For example, the RGA secretary maintained that small farmers in the Northern Region were not sufficiently responsible to be entrusted with the running of "important organisations", such as the RGA.<sup>21</sup> Another prominent rice farmer, Alhaji Abdul-Rahamani, regretted that "the time had not yet come to put small farmers in responsible positions in the Association (RGA), because many of them were still very backward and illiterate, and cannot take their responsibilities seriously".<sup>22</sup> Such remarks are typical of the prejudice held against small farmers by those privileged ones who sought to make the RGA a bastion of their power and authority. They ignored the fact that in Dagbon, as in other parts of the North, small farmers did not constitute only the traditional "backward peasantry", but also teachers, junior civil servants, public employees and various other groups who were among the most educated

members of the community.

This misconceived opinion of small farmers was one of the main reasons why they were excluded from running of the SMU, an organisation which we have already seen was supposedly established to provide for their needs. The frustrations experienced by these small farmers as a result, and which were exacerbated by the blatant corruption of their appointed leaders, led in the end to their total disillusionment with the SMU and to its eventual demise.

The AFRC under Rawlings attempted to improve on the performance of those officials concerned with rural development projects, especially those concerned directly with agricultural production. It also sought to make such projects more accessible to small farmers. Despite Rawlings' personal commitment to reducing social inequalities in Ghanaian society, the AFRC did not succeed to any significant extent in achieving its objectives as regards these farmers. Its leaders were not sufficiently equipped ideologically or professionally to tackle Ghana's serious problems. By their own admission, this regime was engaged on a moral crusade, a kind of "house-cleaning exercise". Their main concern was with punishing of all those found guilty of economic and political corruption against the state. The absence, therefore, of a comprehensive economic and political programme on its part meant that the AFRC was not in a position to introduce major reforms which might have shifted the balance of economic power in favour of the Ghanaian masses, including small farmers. As such, the June 4 revolution made no conceivable impact upon agricultural development in Dagbon. The 'cleansing' of local projects of corrupt officials did not increase the efficiency of these projects, since these were managed by AFRC representatives who did not really take an interest in small farmers, but who seized the opportunity instead to reap some benefits in areas hitherto dominated by their senior colleagues.

### Chieftaincy and Economic Development in Dagbon

In general economic development in the North under Acheampong was frustrated by the failure of the government to introduce a comprehensive package of economic policies, and by its inability or unwillingness to exercise effective control over local bureaucrats who were both politically corrupt and administratively inefficient. As far as Dagbon was concerned, there was a further factor which contributed to its general malaise: chieftaincy factionalism. The significance of chieftaincy in Dagbon was that it exerted its influence at all levels of political decision-making and that only those who supported the ruling gate were officially recognised. As a result, most of the aid administered to farmers went to those supporting the Andani gate, rather than to those best qualified to utilise resources.

The distribution of economic aid in Dagbon was also determined geographically on the basis of gate support. Areas which were under the jurisdiction of Abudulai chiefs were often neglected. No development projects of any consequence were inaugurated during the Acheampong period in areas such as Tolon, Gushiegu, Nanton or the Savelugu out-districts. On the contrary, projects which were earmarked for these areas prior to Acheampong were discontinued within months of his assuming office. Fertilizer stores built by the GGADP in Tolon during 1969 and 1970 were completely abandoned by 1974/75. No fertilizer had been officially distributed to small farmers there since 1973, whereas in the previous four years or so, the area received regular supplies from the GGADP in Tamale.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, projects which had been initiated in Savelugu, Nanton and Gushiegu by the former Busia government (a government largely sympathetic to the Abudulais) in 1970 - feeder roads, wells, dug-outs, small dams - were also abandoned under Acheampong because of an alleged shortage of funds. At the same time, however, similar projects were sprouting up in various Andani-controlled areas such as Tamale, Yendi, Karaga, Mion and

Kumbungu. As the DCE for Yendi pointed out, there were no sound economic reasons for discontinuing projects which were already under construction and in some cases nearing completion other than the fact that they were intended to serve areas which were notoriously anti-Acheampong, or pro-Abudulai.<sup>24</sup> The closure of such projects also meant that funds which had been allocated to them were now being diverted to officials for their personal use and for distributing patronage among their own followers.

There is no doubt that in Dagbon economic development was sacrificed for personal political gains by Acheampong, a consolidation of power by the ruling chieftaincy gate, and for the personal enrichment of a farming elite. Those small farmers who derived any benefits at all from the agricultural development programme were the personal followers or clients of the prominent farmers. The mass of the small farmers in Dagbon, like the rural populace in general, did not benefit directly or indirectly from the policies of the regime as regards agriculture.

If small farmers as a socio-economic group are to benefit from any such programme in the future it will be necessary for structural changes to be made in the administration of aid projects in Dagbon. Furthermore, the importance given to chieftaincy in the day-to-day lives of the people suggests that if economic development in general is to be tackled on a realistic level, no group should be excluded simply on the basis of gate allegiance. A programme of agricultural development must have as its pivot small farmers organised within the framework of a democratic organisation.

A solution to the problem of agricultural development in Dagbon could be provided by the establishment of a Small Farmers' Board or some similar body whose main objective would be to develop small-farmer agriculture by providing all inputs including fertilizer, tractor services and, of course, capital. While such an organisation would be required to operate within

the framework of national government policy, especially as all its funds would be provided by the government, it is also crucially important that it is allowed full control of its most important functions, especially those regarding the allocation and distribution of resources.

An organisation of this nature would be run ideally by a board of representatives elected by Dagomba small farmers for a specific term of office. Furthermore, these representatives would be elected from amongst supporters of both gates on an equal numerical basis. A board so constituted could at least in theory protect the interests of all small farmers irrespective of gate or other allegiances.

While a small farmers' board would be the main body responsible for the administration of aid on behalf of these farmers, private agencies such as those already existing in Dagbon - Demco, Nasia Rice Company, and the various technical services provided by the commercial banks - should of course be encouraged. The services provided by these would not necessarily constitute a duplication of farm services to small farmers, since the private farming agencies never really addressed themselves to the needs of these farmers. Throughout the 1970s they continued to supply services almost exclusively to those big and privileged rice farmers. The banks should also be encouraged to continue with their policy of sponsoring private farmers since their commercial policy would be conducive to the development of rice farming on a competitive basis. As an organisation with responsibility for implementing government agricultural policy among small producers, a small farmers' board would be required to collaborate with other decentralised government bodies, such as the Ministry of Economic Planning and the Ministry of Agriculture, while cooperating closely with other development projects in the area.

In what respects would such a small farmers' organisation differ from others previously set up in the region? The main differences are in respect of structure and orientation. Small farmers were not allowed

to run their own organisations, or even to have a say on matters of general policy, as demonstrated by the SMU. Some organisations, such as the RGA, excluded these altogether from their general membership. But the crucial point is this: farmers' organisations, like most other bodies in Dagbon were influenced by gate considerations to the effect that these conferred grossly unfair advantages upon supporters of the ruling gate among their members. A proposal for a broad-based farmers' organisation would therefore have the advantage of making such an organisation more democratic from the point of view of giving representation to all small farmers, irrespective of gate politics or other identifications.

While these recommendations are not intended as a blueprint for economic development in Dagbon, they do provide a framework within which small farmers as a socio-economic group could be realistically incorporated in a broader programme of rural development. The success or otherwise of such a strategy would depend upon the government's commitment to economic development in Dagbon. It would also depend upon the confidence which the authorities have in the ability of small farmers to run their own show. After all, the problem with small farmers was not their inability to produce, but that they were not trusted with the management of resources. The policy of governments as regards the role of small farmers in agricultural development in Dagbon has been to 'manage' them under the auspices of some organisation or other.

The resources provided by the Acheampong regime for the purpose of agricultural development in Dagbon (and the North in general) were skilfully manipulated to benefit the regime's cronies. At the same time it gave the impression mainly through public declarations and its propaganda machinery that small farmers were central to the success of its agricultural programme. But this was clearly a facade behind which

it took cover. The regime's real intentions were not to develop agriculture by means of small-farmer participation, but rather to introduce a programme of large-scale commercial rice farming which would benefit only those farmers with adequate resources or with access to these. In other words, it was a policy designed specifically to meet the needs of a powerful group of the regime's local allies. The process by which this took place did not only demonstrate the ruthless nature of rice politics, but also emphasised the intricate and complex nature of gate politics, as indeed the interrelationship between chieftaincy, national politics and economic development in Dagbon.

NOTES

1. West Africa, 25 August 1980, p. 1605.
2. Winch, op.cit., p. 139.
3. Bates, op. cit., p. 88.
4. Ibid., p. 17.
5. Ibid., p. 95.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. A. Shepherd, "Agrarian Change in Northern Ghana: Public Investment, Capitalist Farming and Famine", unpublished version, p. 24; also in J. Heyer et al, Rural Development in Tropical Africa, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1981.
9. Ibid.
10. See especially the works by Lipton (1977), Morss et al (1976), Schumacher (1975) and Hart (1982).
11. Bates, op. cit., p. 33.
12. Shepherd, op. cit., p. 24.
13. December 31, 1981, was the date of Jerry Rawlings' second take-over in Ghana when he instituted the PNDC, after removing the democratically elected Hilla Limann.
14. The Workers' Defence Councils (WDCs) were political bodies set up by the PNDC to represent the interests of workers at their workplace and in communities.
15. Private correspondence from M. Eddie, Tamale, 14 June 1982.
16. K. Hart, The Political Economy of West African Agriculture, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 89.
17. Ibid., p. 153.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 154.
20. Ibid.
21. Interview with Abu Alidu, Tamale, 26 April 1978.
22. Interview with Alhaji Salifu Abdul-Rahamani, Tamale, 25 April 1978.
23. Interview with Mr. K. Kadri, District Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Tamale, 17 August 1978.
24. Interview with Mr. Tandoh, DCE Yendi, 24 August 1978.

APPENDIX 1Northern Regional Agricultural Projects (1976-1980)

<u>Project</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount in ₵</u>
1. Bontanga Irrigation Project	1,700 acres for crops and water supply	3,000,000
2. Passam Irrigation Project	5,000 acres for rice and vegetables	7,000,000
3. State Farms Rice Project	1,750 acres at Demon	1,540,000
4. State Farms Groundnut Project	500 acres at Prang	83,000
5. State Farms Cattle Project	At Demon	169,000
6. Kenaf Project (Bast Fibre Board)	9,500 acres in Bawku District	396,000
7. Ghana Community Farms Kenaf Project	700 acres	102,900
8. Ghana Community Farms Mango Project	20,000 acres	4,140,000
9. Ghana Community Farms Yam Project	3,500 acres	1,235,500
10. Ghana Community Farms Maize Project	15,000 acres	2,295,000
11. Ghana Community Farms Rice Project	8,000 acres	1,792,000
12. Ghana Community Farms Groundnut Project	650 acres	107,900
13. Ghana Community Farms Cotton Project	10,000 acres	2,050,000
14. Cotton Development Board Project	20,000 acres	4,400,000
15. Fisheries Repair Depots	-	35,000
16. Fish Culture Project	At Nasia	100,000
17. Inland Fisheries Complex	At Yapei & Yeji	262,000
18. Mobile Landing Facilities	Vehicles	92,000
19. Farm Machinery Project	Vehicles, spare parts, machinery	2,000,000
20. Workshops & Tools Project	Tamale & Yendi	618,000
21. Land Clearing Equipment	Savannah Areas	1,450,000
Total		32,868,300

Source: Five Year Development Plan, 1975/76-1979/80.

APPENDIX 2Upper Regional Agricultural Projects (1976-1980)

<u>Project</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount in ¢</u>
1. Vea Irrigation Project	3,500 acres for vegetables	3,000,000
2. Tono Irrigation Project	5,150 acres for rice and vegetables	21,000,000
3. Tamne Irrigation Project	3,600 acres for rice and upland crops	2,000,000
4. Cashew Project	2,000 acres at Tumu, Wiaga Navrongo	322,000
5. Kenaf Project (Bast Fibre Board)	9,500 acres Bawku District	1,396,500
6. IBRD/Ghana Upper Region Cotton Project	50,000 acres at Navrongo, Tumu, Wa and Bawku	10,300,000
7. Cotton Development Board Project	40,000 acres	8,800,000
8. Ghana Community Farms Mango Project	15,000 acres	3,105,000
9. Ghana Community Farms Yam Project	500 acres	176,500
10. Ghana Community Farms Maize Project	2,500 acres	382,500
11. Ghana Community Farms Rice Project	10,000 acres	2,240,000
12. Ghana Community Farms Cotton Project	5,000 acres	1,025,000
13. Ghana Community Farms Groundnut Project	3,000 acres	498,000
14. IBRD/Ghana Upper Region Groundnut Project	63,000 acres	10,460,000
15. Fish Culture Project	At Kussanaba - Bawku District. At Tizza - Lawra	81,000
16. Fish Repair Depots	-	140,000
17. Farm Machinery Project	Vehicle, Machinery and Spare Parts	1,300,000
18. Workshop & Tools Project	Bawku & Zuarungu	226,000
19. Land Clearing Equipment Project	Savannah areas	1,450,000
<hr/> <b>Total</b> <hr/>		<b>67,902,500</b> <hr/>

Source: Five Year Development Plan, 1975/76 - 1979/80.



13. How much of your rice do you sell to the Rice Mills?
14. To whom do you sell the rest?
15. If you own any farm machinery, please give details.
  - a) tractors
  - b) combine harvesters
  - c) implements
16. How did you obtain these?
17. Do you hire out your machinery to other farmers?
18. How much do you charge?
19. (If a non-owner) from whom do you obtain the services of
  - a) tractor
  - b) combine harvester
20. How much did you pay for such services?
21. If you use bullocks to plough your land, can you tell me where you had them trained?
22. Have you ever received a bank loan for your farming purposes?
23. If yes, please give details.
24. If not in receipt of such a loan, have you ever applied for one?  
If so, what was the outcome?
25. Have you had a loan from any other source for use with your farming?
26. If so, please give details.
27. If you employ "by day" (casual labour) on your farm, can you please state
  - a) where you recruit from
  - b) how much do you pay
28. Give details of any other forms of labour that you use.
29. From whom do you obtain your fertilizer supplies?

30. How much do you pay for it?
31. Do you experience difficulties in obtaining your full requirements? Can you explain these difficulties?
32. Would you like to increase the size of your rice farm?
33. What are your main reasons for wanting to or not wanting to increase your rice farm?
34. Would you like to expand on your other crops? If yes, give details.
35. If you are a member of the RGA, when did you join?
36. What benefits do you receive from the Association?
37. Can you tell me anything about the activities of the Association?
38. If not a member of the Association, can you explain why you have not become a member?
39. Do you belong to any other farmers' organisations? If so, give details.
40. Where is your present farm situated?
41. How long have you been farming your present plot?
42. Where were you farming before that?
43. Why did you change?
44. Did you experience any problems in getting land from the chief?
45. Are you satisfied with the help that you are getting from the government as far as rice farming is concerned?
46. If you are not satisfied, can you explain why, and what do you think can be done to improve the situation?

47. Are you related to any chief in the North? If so, which one?
48. Do you support Andani or Abudulai?
49. Do you think that chieftaincy is important in deciding whether or not a farmer here in the North will get help with his farming?
50. (If a non-supporter of the ruling gate) why don't you support the side which is more likely to benefit you with your farming activities?
51. Do you think that it would be better for small farmers to concentrate upon cultivating traditional foodcrops, while rice farming was left to the big farmers?
52. If yes, can you explain why?
53. Can you tell me anything more about rice farming which we have not covered in this interview, in particular about the general problems facing the rice farmers in the North?

APPENDIX 4Questionnaire for Electoral Survey of Rice Farmers in Northern Ghana  
(1979)

Name:

Tribe:     Dagomba .....            Non-Dagomba .....

Age

Family Size

Educational background

Type of farming enterprise

1. What kind of help would you like to see the government give to rice farmers in the North?
2. Do you think that the newly-elected government will give more help to all rice farmers in the North than did Acheampong?
3. What is the reason for your answer?
4. For which party did you vote during the first round of the elections?
5. What were your main reasons for supporting this party?
6. Which candidate did you support during the second round of the elections?
7. Why did you vote for him?
8. Did you support this candidate because you think that his party represented the interests of the chieftaincy gate that you support?
9. Do you think that on the whole Dagombas voted according to which party or candidate supported their chieftaincy side?
10. Are you a member of the RGA?
11. As far as you are aware, did the leaders of the Association advise their followers to vote for a particular party or candidate?
12. If yes, how were these members advised to vote?

13. Did you attend any political meetings during the election campaign?
14. In what way did the party say they were going to help the farmers?
15. Have you ever voted in any previous elections?
16. Which of these parties have you supported in the past?  
CPP ..... PP ..... Any other .....
17. Do you think that the PNP stood for the same policies and ideas of the CPP?
18. If yes, can you give me an example of such a policy?
19. Do you think that the PFP stood for the same policies and ideas as the Progress Party?
20. If yes, can you give me an example?
21. Why do you think that Limann won the North so convincingly?
22. In your opinion, why didn't the SDF perform better in Dagbon?
23. Do you think that Ibrahim Mahama was the right leader for the SDF?
24. Why do you think that he was or wasn't?
25. Why do you think that Owusu failed to beat Limann in Dagbon during the second round elections?

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