Impossible Histories, Power, and Exclusion in the Gold Coast and Ghana 1930–2020

Stacey, Paul Austin

CHAPTER 7

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Paul Stacey

> In the rough and tumble of social interaction, groups are known to exploit the ambiguities of inherited forms, to impart new evaluations or valencies to them, to borrow forms more expressive of their interests, to create wholly new forms in answer to changed circumstances ... "A culture" is thus better seen as a series of processes that construct, reconstruct, and dismantle cultural materials in response to identifiable determinants.
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> WOLF 1982, 387[1]

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> That the [Nawuri] case has been shown to be fictitious does not disprove the forces of tradition.
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> Colonial Officer Dixon (DIXON, para. 66, 1955)

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1   Introduction

Wolf emphasizes the making of cultural forms and related social organization as an inherently messy and relational process shaped by combinations of broader forces, local ingenuity, changes in circumstances, and the positionality of diverse actors: notions of fixed and bounded groups are altogether negated. In contrast, the second quote alludes to colonial ideas of African social organization as held together by eternally fixed traditions and is used to justify the dismissal of Nawuri claims of autonomy. The colonial assertion was important

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1 Also in Schneider and Schneider 2004: 502.

and forceful because state formation and local authority in this part of Ghana was based on versions of the past that had no place for Nawuri agency; any Nawuri claim to the contrary faced systemic rejection. This chapter examines the dynamic relationships between, on the one hand, power initially vested by the British colonial authority in particular versions of tradition based on local polities governed by ethnically defined chiefs, and, on the other, the production of 'alternative' versions of traditional chief-based authority, and the making of an ethno-political group – the Nawuri – who were excluded from the process. This provides insights into relational features of power as producing opposing social categories and cultures through a contested historical process where groups borrow, exploit, and invest new meanings in inherited categories to reduce uncertainty and maximize ability to influence and gain from local development. In a Wolfean perspective we see how Nawuri historical usage and subsequent social mobilization as an excluded group was influenced by translocal power relations and colonial understandings of African tradition as fixed and bounded. The significance of categories established under colonial influence is also relevant for understanding present-day social organization, where cultural expressions relate to the deeper and older organizational and ideologically charged forces and produce understandings of tradition to lay claims to new opportunities in the present that arise from Ghana's democratization. As such, the chapter unravels 'the articulation between the micro-physics of politics and the macro-physics of the state' (Ghani 1995, 33).[2]

Today, ethnic identification, the promotion of a unique history and culture with ties to specific lands, and institutions of chieftaincy are all significant markers of countless groups all over Ghana. Such markers reproduce popular perceptions of society as organized around loosely connected yet distinct cultural groups that have existed since time immemorial and whose development is somehow separate from modern political developments. In contrast, this chapter endeavours to explain the making of such cultural traits as an open-ended and contested historical process which, in the case of the Nawuri, emerged following exclusion from the colonial state and through efforts to define themselves as autonomous and equal to others. Today, the group remains disadvantaged and unrecognized, and continues its struggle to gain autonomy. Consequently, the group continues unsuccessfully to wrestle itself

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2 The title of this chapter was inspired by the article: '*Some histories are more possible than others:* Structural power, big pictures and the goal of explanation in the anthropology of Eric Wolf', by John Gledhill (2005). This chapter is based on doctoral research kindly financed by the Consultative Research Committee for Development Research (FFU), under DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency). Project nr. 926-RUC.

from an unfavourable positioning in histories of the area that were written by others long ago in the colonial period to underpin local governance (Stacey 2015). The formal institutionalization of Nawuri exclusion by key actors, state institutions, and formal state law means therefore that from a state perspective Nawuri history and traditions are 'impossible', and state formation has demanded that they constitute a people without history.

This chapter, then, is a story of a group formed as they create for themselves their own history, institutional forms, and traditions from the ambiguities they experience as they are edited out of area history by more powerful forces, including the British administering authority and the UN Trusteeship Council in the colonial period, and successive Ghanaian governments after Ghana's independence in 1957. To set the scene, the following section describes a recent Nawuri cultural celebration. This is followed by a discussion of Wolf's concept of structural power that informs the analysis, and an overview of the data collection and methods. Next, Nawuri struggles covering three historical periods of crisis are presented and discussed. The chapter closes by drawing the main points together in a conclusion, highlighting the continued significance of 'tradition' as established in the 1930s and exemplifying Wolf's concept of structural power.

2   A Nawuri Celebration of Uniqueness

At dawn on Christmas Eve 2019, a large group of volunteers lined up in Kpandai, Ghana and started to sweep the length of the dusty, partly tarred and potholed main road with short brooms of coarse grass.[3] The early start avoided the coming heat of the sun as the three-hour sweep helped to prepare for a six-day festival. This was to welcome Nawuri on their return from all corners of the traditional homeland and to commemorate a new institution, the NPA (Nawuri Professionals Association). The NPA aims to harness unity, expertise, and experience amongst a diaspora Nawuri community and promote a unique cultural heritage. Festival activities included a well-attended 'Unity Walk' with 'Saaru' traditional dancers and drumming. Traditional dignitaries led the walk accompanied by two women carrying large saucepans of chicken cooked with maize and palm oil. Three other women chanted while carefully sprinkling the food on the ground from East to West, and from South to North to pacify evil spirits, purify the land, and invite Nawuri deities to feast. In another

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3   Special thanks to Ben Asunki for collecting data about the ceremony.

libation ceremony attended by chiefs adorned with colourful traditional regalia and representing different Nawuri villages, a ram and a white cock were sacrificed to appease Nawuri ancestors and land deities, and to grant Nawuri a new beginning devoid of all harm. The chiefs were flanked by enthusiastic Nawuri youth dancing to different 'Baya' traditional dances and coming from the different chiefly villages in Nawuri lands: Kitare, Nkanchina, Bladjai, Balai, Kabonwule, Dodoia, Kpandai, and Katiejeli. Ghanaian national media in the form of Tv3, UTV, and Home Base TV filmed the spectacle. In the following days activities included readings of Nawuri history, presentations of Nawuri belief systems, speeches with appeals to increase recognition given to Nawuri Queen mothers, and a hotly contested Nawuri proverb competition. During the festival representatives from each traditional area performed their own customary warrior dance with contrasting styles of drumming, colour, and choreography as markers of uniqueness. Youth from Kitare danced 'Kaake'; Nkanchina youth danced 'Kalei', Kpandai youth danced 'Sukuudai', Balai youth danced 'Gangaan', Kabonwule youth danced 'Kakpancha', and Katiejeli youth danced 'Ijii', which is exclusively for women. On 28 December a grand durbar was well attended and led by the chiefs and elders.

Invited guests including local government officials, parliamentarians, and religious heads, who were all seated together, many of them dressed colourfully. Here, the Okyeame (chief linguist) of the KpandaiWura (Chief of Kpandai) offered libation. The invited guests and dignitaries made speeches for fund-raising programmes such as the launch of a youth scholarship scheme for up-and-coming Nawuri professionals. Speeches calling for ethnic unity and mutual respect were given by representatives of other ethnic youth associations in the area, including Konkomba, Kotokeli, Ewe, and Nchumuru. Prior to each speech a powerful Nawuri appellation, 'Kamanchor Kabuja', was chanted. After the speeches Nawuri women of the witch hunter's cult 'Alijii' or 'Okule' performed another traditional dance. One Nawuri onlooker described how 'the durbar was indeed historic, colourful, sensational, memorable and an unforgettable event that would forever linger in the minds of all Nawuri and other ethnic groups at large on our land'. A church service attended by a large congregation dressed wholly in white rounded off the festival on Sunday 29 December.

The numerous activities and enactments of Nawuri ritual, ceremony, and ancient traditions provided ample opportunities for interaction between villagers and dignitaries, affirming ideas of Nawuri culture in the popular imagination and its inherent uniqueness among other ethnic groups. The customs built bridges between imageries of an ancient, non-secular past and the secular ambitions of the present; between ideas of Nawuri as a corporate body and

the relative autonomy and complexity of each Nawuri sub-clan. The displays projected a powerful image of Nawuri as having unique traits, an essence that declared what it is to be Nawuri while defining who belonged to the group and who did not (Schneider and Schneider 2004). For any observer it was difficult not to be overwhelmed by the reverence enacted, while for outsiders the displays of culture were purely incomprehensible, fascinating, and obscure – as was wholly intended.

3   Grasping Power

How can we comprehend such displays of tradition and culture from a power perspective? One starting point is to recognize power as a notoriously slippery concept where, on the one hand, it is often central in explanations for societal change, yet, on the other, is often ill-defined, used in the abstract as either a catch-all or as a singular unexplained force, or understood as an ideological charge (Hall et al. 2011). In EPWH, and especially in later works, Wolf established an open and comparative approach to power, which theretofore was a concept most routinely encountered in Universalist philosophy (Portis-Winner 2006).[4] In brief, Wolf distinguished four modalities of power: (1) embodied or inherent as an individual attribute or capability; (2) the ability to impose one's will on others; (3) tactical or organizational control by groups over settings or contexts in which people interact; and (4) structural power, as the ability to organize the settings themselves through, for example, ideology – so defining the political economy (Wolf 1990; McGee and Warms 2013).[5] For Wolf, a general characteristic of power is as a quotidian feature of 'all relations among people', and as derived from positions in structural power, itself defined as the ability to organize social settings, and which 'shapes the social field of action so as to render some kinds of behaviour possible, while making others less possible or impossible' (Wolf 1990, 587). This resonates with Bourdieu, for whom 'The degree of autonomy of a certain field is measured by its ability to reject external determinants and obey only the specific logic of the field' (Bourdieu 1993, 38–9).[6] In EPWH, a principal argument is the interdependence and changing

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4 Geertz 1973 however is a pre-EPWH example of power conceptualized to explain how traditional ideas around culture influence the political character of contemporary organization. Here from Barrett et al 2001.

5 The concept of power was developed by Wolf after EPWH in, for example, *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis* (Wolf 1999).

6 Despite the similarity for Bourdieu a main concern is governmentality, while for Wolf it is the political economy.

temporal and spatial relationships between power, ideas, and social relations (Barrett et al. 2001). Hence, Wolf's approach to the power of culture is to trace and relate social life and traditions to histories of unequal relations and the workings of discourse, as opposed to basing investigation around notions of group commonalities or differences (Wolf 2001; McGee and Warms 2013). For Wolf, power is fundamentally *relational* and extends beyond typical Weberian perspectives in terms of the exercise of force and coercion (Heyman 2003; Barrett et al. 2001; Weber 1978). Social groups' development of a language of mobilization, their organization, and the forms that culture and identity take are therefore manifestations of power, as are the ways they confront, form alliances, and collude with other forces in an open and unfinished process (Hall et al. 2011; Procter 2004). Wolf's conceptualization of power subsequently also considers social groups' ability to bring about intended effects, the shaping of surrounding conditions of indeterminacy, and the unintended outcomes within a social field (Moore 1978; Heyman 2003; Russell 1938). Structural power is also elusive and processual, as it 'makes, maintains, and erodes' social and cultural relations (Wolf 2001, 386; Heyman 2003, 140). The 'making' aspect resonates meanwhile with E. P. Thompson, who rejected structural functionalism and exemplifies the impact of power in terms of social fields that 'make' and 'unmake' categories such as class out of disparate groups of people, endeavouring (successfully and unsuccessfully) to adjust contrasting heritages into new social orders.[7]

The Wolfean idea of power as a force field causing differing and multiple outcomes is common today, where, for example, 'forms of dominance, contention and resistance may develop, as well as certain regularities and forms of ordering', and where organizing practices are the result not of 'a common understanding or normative agreement', but of 'the forces at play within the field' (Nuijten 2003, 12). Consequently, it is how individuals and social groups position themselves in structural power that conditions social and cultural organizational possibilities.[8] Indeed, for Wolf, the relationships between structural power, actual forms of organization (social, socio-political, or cultural), and modes of production are so significant that structural power is only perceptible after a clean break from the forms of organization in which it occurs (Heyman 2003, 140). This means that power is often not immediately observable, noticeable, or tangible although ethnographic methods allow for the

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7 The 'making' from E.P. Thompson as in *'The Making of the English Working Class'.* Thompson 1982.

8 For brevity culture is taken to mean 'shared understandings and their representations in language, objects, and practices', Tilly 2005, 96.

observation of both its intended and concrete effects, and its unintended and unfinished outcomes (Smith 2018; Heyman 2003). The epistemological point of departure of a mutually constitutive relation between culture and power marked Wolf's distance from contemporary anthropology which, with its keen focus on deciphering meanings, invariably negated either the power of culture, or the culture of power.[9] The centrality of wider power relations as well as the role of history in making culture is also evident in Bourdieu and Foucault, for whom the universalizing and ubiquitous forms that power takes, and which impact on consciousness, demand investigation from multiple perspectives; and where, like Wolf, 'a society without power can only be an abstraction' (Foucault 1982, 791).[10]

Wolf's conceptualization of power bridges Foucault's focus – its impact on consciousness, omnipresence, and indeterminacy – with that of Marx, where power is manifest in the shaping of the political economy and particularly the organization of labour (Portis-Winner 2006). By Wolf, the history of Nawuri is consequently explained in his chapter as that of a 'people without history' emerging from an unfavourable positioning in structural power, which shapes the social setting, the organization of the group, and where 'both the people who claim history as their own and the people to whom history has been denied emerge as participants in the same historical trajectory' (Wolf 1982: 23). As such, the cultural festival described above and the assertions of unique history should be understood in the context of Nawuri efforts to shape the broader political developmental trajectory of the polity in which they live, though this has defined them as unequal, and conditions the forms that their social organization takes, and shows how 'complex historical processes produce differentiated sociocultural forms over time in any given location' (Schneider and Schneider 2004: 501).

The key methodological points of departure for this chapter, then, are to approach power as an open process with both intended and unintended effects on social organization (Procter 2004), in which, to paraphrase Sally Falk Moore, the focus on *process* provides a flag under which structural

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9   This research focus on societal schisms and crisis reflects a Marx epistemology that reveals otherwise hidden and contradictory societal conditions, together with the power relations behind.

10   In *Envisioning Power* ... (1999) Wolf establishes a distance from both Foucault and Bourdieu by undertaking anthropological case studies and formulating grand theory, based on the comparison of concrete manifestations of power in three very different temporal and spatial empirical settings: the Kwakiuti, the Aztecs, and National Socialist Germany.

explanations are dismissed (Moore 1978, xix), and where representations of social organization and related institutions are approached as claims rather than facts (Lund 2007).

4   Methods

The empirical data for this chapter are based on six months of ethnographic fieldwork and archival research in Ghana over three visits from July 2008 to February 2010 (Stacey 2012). This has been followed up by online and telephone communication and written documentation received from Nawuri residents. Data collection focused on the usage and instrumentalization of tradition by different stakeholders, and the meanings and significance given to Nawuri institutions of chieftaincy, both in everyday life and in formal state law over the period from 1930 to the present. One key area was how processes of recognition and non-recognition impacted on the ability of the Nawuri to benefit from a range of valuable resources (Ribot and Peluso 2009). For this chapter, the empirical data of the Nawuri struggle are interpreted anew with Wolfean perspectives to unravel the workings of structural power 'that not only operates within settings or domains but [...] also organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves' (Wolf 1999).[11] For example, the data are interpreted to explore how structural power conditioned the making of unequal relations and social categories, determined the ability to control land, labour, and people, defined access to positions of authority in state institutions and ability to determine employment opportunities, influenced the ability of groups to enjoy public funding for traditional institutions, and enabled both the collection and distribution of land rents and tax revenues, and how local organization and mobilization were shaped.[12] The following empirical sections of the chapter are divided into three periods marking crisis and differentiation: The first covers the institutionalization of tradition from about 1930 to 1957 and covers Nawuri experiences in the colonial period from the implementation of

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11   Here from Barrett et al 2001.

12   The archival research was undertaken at Northern Region of Ghana Public Records, Tamale, Northern Region, Ghana (NRG). A notable informant was J. Mbimgadong (Nana Obimpeh ca 1930–2013), a central Nawuri figure for at least sixty years. Obimpeh spoke to the UN General Assembly in 1952 for the Togoland Congress, was voted in as MP for Kpandai with the National Alliance of Liberals in the short-lived return to parliamentary election in 1969, and was Chief of Balai in the Nawuri traditional area (Balaiwura) for nearly thirty years. Another key informant is Nana Atorsah II, present day Kpandaiwura, and son of Nana Atorsah I (*ca.* 1920–72).

the system of indirect rule by the British administering authority, to Ghana's attainment of independence. The second covers a decade-long period of political instability in Ghana that overlapped with a local and drawn-out Nawuri-initiated dispute over chieftaincy from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s. Finally, the last period covers the emerging democratization of Ghana from the 1990s (which saw ethnic fighting in East Gonja) up to the relative political stability of the present with local government reform and promises of improved recognition and representation. The sections of empirical data comprise highly compressed and reworked parts of previously published works that are based on different conceptual and theoretical framings (Stacey 2014; 2015; 2016).[13] Accordingly, this chapter provides new Wolfe-inspired interpretations of Nawuri history and struggle.

5   Categorizing Tradition 1930–57

In the 1930s the Nawuri were a minority in the area in which they lived. With other minorities in the Kpandai area, the Nanjuro and Nchrumbru, they shared a limited inclination to develop institutions of chieftaincy in the dispersed hamlets they populated prior to the introduction of indirect rule by the British colonial power.[14] The early 1930s, however, marked a turning point as the homelands of the three minority groups were incorporated into the newly demarcated East Gonja district in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. This was an element in the policy of indirect rule introduced by Guggisberg (Governor of the Gold Coast, 1919–28) which meant ruling through designated 'Native' institutions with what was to become the Native Authority system. In East Gonja, the chiefs and traditions of a much larger group, the Gonja, gained colonial recognition. This was based on a firm colonial belief in a traditional allegiance existing between the minority groups and Gonja overlords, and of a historical Gonja conquest over the area.[15] Subsequently, society was ethnically stratified with the Nawuri, Nanjuro, and Nchrumbru coming under the control of state-recognized Gonja chiefs. The policy of indirect rule through Native Authorities was convenient and cheap as it allowed large areas and scattered groups to be ruled effectively through select Africans who held extensive powers over land and people. It also required the presence of an

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13   Empirical data are reused and reprinted with permission of *Journal of African History; African Studies Review*, and *Development and Change*.
14   Interview, Mbimgadong (see footnote 12), 18 December 2009.
15   NRG 8/2/198, report by Duncan-Johnstone on the Yapai conference, 6 May 1930.

absolute minimum of colonial staff, who defined procedures for the selection and appointment of new chiefs through dialogue with those already recognized by the colonial state (Bening 1999; Chanock 1991). A key objective for the colonial power was to separate what was understood as modern and secular political development from African socio-political organization, which itself was perceived as bounded and fixed. The policy was flawed in its conception, however, by assumptions of African fixity and the presumption that African social organization could be changed radically by meetings with colonial powers (Lund 2004; Spear 2003).

The Native Authority system was designed to ensure that the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast underwent a slower pace of economic development than that planned for the southern 'Colony' of the Gold Coast. Subsequently, in the area occupied by the minority groups, commercial farming, land sales, and cash-cropping were restricted. Both the British administering authority and the newly recognized, ethnically defined chiefs accordingly asserted politically convenient versions of the past that justified Gonja control in the present and at the same time dismissed all other versions as historical fictions (Mbowuru 2002; Ampiah 1991). Forthwith, a form of tributary mode of production governed land and people, with the state-recognized Gonja chiefs controlling land distribution and extracting a cut of agricultural production from the minority groups, who were mainly subsistence farmers. In turn, the recognized chiefs had the power to control land access and to distribute the extracted surplus as they saw fit. This facilitated the development of ethnically defined patron–client relations. Thereafter, the colonial power and privileged Gonja authority figures reconstructed social mechanisms and cultural meanings around resource distribution, so that different forms of tribute, rent, 'drink money', and labour were imbued with and legitimated in line with ancient Gonja customs and Nawuri traditional allegiance.

Ethnically defined contentions between the stratified groups surfaced soon after the imposition of the Native Authority system and demonstrate how radically the newly formed power relations had reshaped socio-political relationships. In 1932, for example, Nawuri protested their exclusion from the selection process for a new Gonja chief of Kpandai.[16] And in 1935 colonial officers voiced concern that segments of the minority groups were calling for secession from Gonja-controlled areas.[17] In 1943, Nawuri protested to the colonial administration that Gonja-led conscription drives, supposedly for World War II efforts,

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16   NRG 4/2/1, correspondence from DC Krachi to CCNT, 26 Sept. 1932.
17   NRG 8/4/73, DC Salaga, Informal Diary, July 1935.

were misused as labour was diverted to the detriment of Nawuri farming liveli-
hoods. In the following years, the power of the social field around tradition that
had produced, and systematized, ethnically based inequalities led the Nawuri
to construct their own unique institutions and power symbols. Hence, they
developed institutions of chieftaincy like their colonially endorsed masters
to resist Gonja domination and gain control over their own history and tradi-
tions. Agency vested in chieftaincy by the minority groups gained momentum
with changes in formal state law, when new local government institutions in
the form of District Councils and Local Councils replaced the Native Authority
system in 1951. Although suffrage was introduced, one third of the new govern-
ment institutions' membership was reserved for the recognized (Gonja) chiefs,
who were to preside over the new councils, which also bore Gonja names.[18]
In East Gonja the reform established the Alfai Local Council in Kpandai in
1951, which was one of twelve local councils under the new Gonja Volta District
Council.[19] The minority groups had just one traditional representative on the
Alfai Local Council and none at the district level. The local government reform
triggered minority group mobilization with the elevation of a Nawuri, 'Nana
Atorsah', as 'Nawuri-wura' (literally, Nawuri head-chief), and as 'Chief of the
Nawuri Land'. This was a direct counter to Gonja influence over the new coun-
cils and aimed to ensure that minority groups had traditional representation
there.[20]

In the early 1950s there were numerous skirmishes in Kpandai, ethnically
based complaints, and protests of unfairness, prejudice, and discrimination
against the local council. Nawuri subsequently refused to pay market stall fees
in Kpandai, sent dozens of complaints to all levels of government that went
unheeded, and eventually boycotted the local councils altogether (Stacey 2014).
Their protests emphasized their own unique traditional titles, sacred rights,
traditions, and histories in attempts to overturn the lack of representation and
recognition. Written complaints were rife with colonially introduced nomen-
clature such as 'paramount chief', 'divisional area', 'native authority', 'tradi-
tional area', 'traditional council', 'customary rights', and 'native land rights. And
their protests highlighted numerous traditions, customs, deities, fetishes, and
ancient rites defined in ethnically exclusive terms. They asserted fundamental

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18   NRG 4/7/1, letter from CCNT Norton-James to the Chief Secretary, Ministry of Local
      Government, Accra, 21 November 1950.
19   The name 'Alfai' is the Gonja term, literally 'Home of Muslims'. The local council system
      was abolished by President Kwame Nkrumah, who centralized power in the early years
      after independence and removed chiefs' powers.
20   NRG 8/2/210, letter from Nawuri elders to DC Salaga, 14 October 1951.

differences between their ways and those of their ostensibly 'traditional' over-lords by describing divergences in settlement patterns, languages, dances, and clothes, and utilized the Akan prefix *Nana* (denoting a revered elder) to affirm a southern heritage which the 'northern' Gonja did not have.[21] Indeed, the Nawuri did all they could in accordance with ideals of civil disobedience to affirm and establish a separate past. They also constructed imaginary worlds to define themselves as unique, and, by so doing, to appeal to the ideas and values recognized by the British under the Native System of rule.[22]

The local contentions sparked by the outright dismissal of Nawuri claims to their own history quickly reached the attention of global institutions. This was because Kpandai and the East Gonja district were situated in the UN-administered territory of Togoland, and the UN Trusteeship Council had a responsibility to monitor the status of rights of the population living there. More broadly, the trusteeship system oversaw the thorny issue of whether Togoland, which at the time was divided into British and French territories, should eventually be unified, or integrated into existing British and French colonial territories. Significantly, the UN trusteeship mandate stated that any future status of Togoland (either unified or integrated) must pay full regards to the wishes of the whole Togoland population and respect their native status.[23] This meant that the UN Trusteeship Council monitoring the area had an obligation to ensure the British administering authority protected the *native rights* of all the minority groups living there.[24] Consequently, Nawuri developed a language of rights, ideas, and symbols to promote their own *native status* and appealed to the UN Trusteeship system to recognize that British policy dismissed these very rights, which the mandate held in high regard. As such, Nawuri highlighted how the British administering authority had dismissed any ideas that the group could have a history and traditions of their own, thus unjustly excluding Nawuri from representation on the local council and on

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21   NRG 8/3/184, 'UN Visiting Mission Annual Report for Northern Togoland 1952'.

22   Interview, Mbimgadong (see footnote 12), 18 December 2009.

23   Britain outwardly committed to neutrality, as expected by the UN Trusteeship Council, but pushed nevertheless for integration. See Amenumey (1989), 80.

24   The debate over unification and integration was known as the so-called Togoland Question and became pressing through the 1950s as two of the largest Gold Coast political parties, the southern-based Convention People's Party (CPP), and the Northern Peoples Party (NPP), in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, both pushed for independence and integration of British Togoland into a future Ghana.

UN-supported institutions, which were otherwise designed to ensure local consultation and protection of local native rights.[25]

Nawuri gained the attention of the UN Trusteeship system by sending alarmist telegrams such as 'Intimidation and human torture being administered'[26] and 'Inhuman atrocities being inflicted on peoples'.[27] They developed social justice and humanitarian dimensions of 'tradition' and emphasized 'modern' characteristics of their traditional cultural institutions. Their aims were to legitimate their claims to ancient homelands, gain political representation in modern institutions, and ensure recognition of their native status by appealing to the language of rights promoted by the UN Trusteeship system. The newly proclaimed 'Nana Atorsah Agyeman, Head Chief of the Nawuris, Kpandai', wrote protests to the Trusteeship Council in 1951 and 1952 which were rebuffed on the grounds that the group did not represent the whole area and that their 'traditional allegiance' was to the Gonja (UNBISNET 1951; 1952). And in December, 1952, the Nawuri dissident J. Mbimgadong (later Nana Obimpeh I, Balaiwura, see Figure 7.1) spoke to the UN in New York on behalf of a delegation supporting the unification of Togoland, and accentuating the persistent undermining of Nawuri native status and history.[28]

> We are unduly suppressed [and] not allowed to speak [and are] subjected to severe punishment [because men] have been brought over to Northern Togoland and are made chiefs superceding our own chiefs. We hope that this Committee being made up of sympathetic people – people who are really humanitarian – [will ensure] a humanitarian measure will be taken [which is] satisfactory to the needs of the people.[29]

Other appeals pointed out the uniqueness of Nawuri and that the UN was 'dedicated to peace, law, order, justice and fair play among the nations irrespective of size, race, or strength' while the British administering authority had

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25   The institutions were the Enlarged Joint Togoland Consultative Commission (EJTCC), and the Joint Togoland Council (JTC). That Nawuri persistently emphasized notions of inclusiveness and justice contrasts with a dominant historiographical perspective that the meeting of European and Africans resulted mainly in authoritarian institutions of customary authority. See for example Mamdani 1996.

26   NRG 8/22/27, telegram from Secretary of Togoland Congress to Ministry of Defense and External Affairs, 31 July 1953.

27   NRG 8/22/27, anonymous telegram to GA Salaga, 1 August 1953.

28   Interview with J. K. Mbimgadong, Kpandai, 22 December 2009.

29   NRG 8/22/27, speech by Ijemple (J. K) Mbimgadong, Representative of Joint Togoland Congress to the UN Fourth Committee, 19 December 1952.

undermined the 'basic guarantees, securities, rights and protections granted to the people … under the UN Charter'.[30] Hence, the situation conditioned the minority groups to justify their own claims to native status with references to the ideals and ideas of the UN system itself. The influence of the UN system on Nawuri mobilization around tradition is moreover evident in that the campaign which attempted to rewrite history was non-violent at this juncture because it endeavoured to appeal to the well-publicized ideals of the powerful UN system. Overall, then, we see how the power of tradition influenced the actions, ideas, language, and organization of competing local, colonial, and global institutions, none of whom, incidentally, cast any doubt on the role tradition had played and should play in determining socio-political organization. This is clear from some correspondence below, where Nawuri campaigners emphasize how the British administering authority has negated sacred traditions:

> [I]s there any wors[e] injury to a tribe whose dialect, customs and culture are not identical to each other, [to force] that tribe in his own God-Given-Land to subjugate entirely to [another] tribe, who is in no way superior in anything to that of the aborigines [?] [A]nd for the Administering Authority [to keep silent] over our repeated petitions and resolutions. [This] is a serious challenge to our integrity, which is not the least expected from a representative of such a Great Empire whose democracy the whole British Subjects are proud of [sic].[31]

Other petitions stressed that Great Britain and France, in 'classic colonial style through suppression, oppression, [and a] reign of terror [had contradicted] the sacred, international, legal, and moral duties they have assumed'.[32] After several years of protests, countless complaints, and investigations including a UN-instigated inquiry in 1955, the minority groups finally managed to gain the right to *traditional* representation on the local council. However, the outcome was a pyrrhic victory because the position was conditional on the approval of Gonja chiefs, so the move provided for a new mechanism for Gonja to assert

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30   NRG 8/22/27, 'Petition submitted by the Togoland Congress, including the natural rulers and various political parties', undated.

31   NRG 8/2/210, petition from the Paramount Chief of Kpandai and 13 others to the Trusteeship Council, the governor, and 12 other administering authority institutions, 1 February 1954.

32   NRG 8/22/27, 'Petition submitted by the Togoland Congress, including the natural rulers and various political parties', undated.

authority over the Nawuri. In brief, the 'solution' reproduced the social field of ethnically defined inequality and the narrative of a need to protect ancient tribal allegiances (Stacey 2014).[33] This is evident in the conclusion to a colonial investigation into the Nawuri complaints:

> The Nawuris have gone to such pains to distort historical fact in order to try and build up claim to dominance in the local Alfai council (sic). That their case has been shown to be fictitious does not disprove the forces of tradition.[34]

So, the British administering authority dismissed Nawuri claims and affirmed that their chiefs were false and that the group had no traditions or history of their own. For assurance, strict instructions were sent that, forthwith, colonial officials should address the proclaimed Nawuri Paramount Chief Nana Atorsah by lay name only, and that official correspondence should label the man in terms such as 'self-elected' leader, a 'self-styled chief', and 'person describing himself as a Head Chief'.[35]

The dialectic between the colonial denial of Nawuri agency and history, and the social mobilization and development of Nawuri chiefs exemplifies how cultural change developed under 'variable, but also highly determinate circumstances' which at different times both provided for and limited the creativity and resistance of the emerging group in 'varied circumstances [in which the social group] shape, adapt, or jettison their cultural understandings or, alternatively, find themselves blocked in doing so' (Wolf 2010, xxiii). We also see how structural power orchestrated the social field, with Nawuri adopting the nomenclature of their oppressors and contributing to the production of a contested field of action around tradition that became a key marker of social organization, with previous, fluid socio-political relations giving way to mutually exclusive, ethnically defined categories.

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33 NRG 8/2/212, file note from GA Salaga to Dixon, undated. The compiler assumed the Gonja version of history was correct but wrote the related file is 'in effect little more than an index with notes of the files in question and cannot claimed [sic] to be a complete or fully authoritative record of the subject'.

34 Dixon, para. 66, 1955.

35 NRG 8/2/22, letter from CRO to Ass. GA Salaga, 10 December 1952. NRG 8/2/21, letter from CCNT to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, 22 February 1952. NRG 8/2/212, letter from CRO to GA Damongo, 30 November 1955. The process of eliding Nawuri from history as an autonomous group is also evident in a 1960 map of Ghanaian ethnic groups, where the group does not appear, despite the naming of many other, numerically smaller ethnic groups.

On independence in March 1957, the Nawuri did not experience any changes in the fields of power that defined them as unequal both in law and practice. In the perspective of the unintended effects of structural power, however, the minority group did succeed in creating locally legitimate and popular traditional institutions that took advantage of the ambiguities that developed as result of colonial power vesting its agency in tradition. Informally, Nawuri chiefs, for example, gained substantial ability to influence local affairs even though the formal avenues were closed off, and the group's instrumentalization of tradition enabled the development of a group identity, collective ethnic expression, and the assertion of local discourses around rights and justice. Thereby, translocal relationships enabled the development and mobilization of a local language of rights to come to terms with political upheaval, but which itself was conditioned by the norms and ideas of more powerful institutions that from the start had defined the group as unequal.

6   New Politics and Stalled Ambitions 1968–1976

This section outlines the continuation of the Nawuri struggle for the recognition of their traditional authorities, as exemplified by a complex dispute over the appointment of the chief of Kpandai, and which spanned about a decade of political change and upheaval in Ghana from the late 1960s. The struggle reflects the continuation of Nawuri resistance to the constraints imposed by ethnically defined chief-based rule, their efforts to affirm their own constructions of cultural relations, and how their articulations were conditioned by broader power relations and the continuation of discursive assertions that denied their claims. The struggle shows therefore that, as a continuation of the colonial period, the use of tradition by Ghanaian governments after independence categorized the Nawuri as a group without agency, and, ultimately, still without traditions and a history of their own.

The so-called 'Kanankulai skin affair' was a dispute which on the surface concerned whether the subject group, Nawuri, should have a say in the selection of their immediate traditional overlord, the Gonja chief of Kpandai. It emerged in Kpandai, East Gonja, in 1968 after the death of the incumbent chief. It caused a good deal of disruption in East Gonja over the following decade and the warring parties never agreed on any lasting solution.[36] The

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36   *Kanankulaiwura*: literally, Chief Eater of Meat Lumps. Interview with J. Mbimgadong, Kpandai, 23 July 2009. The 'skin', or in southern Ghana the 'stool', symbolize a social group, ancestry, leadership, or attachment to land.

FIGURE 7.1   Balaiwura, Obimpeh J. Mbimgadong I, 2009.
           SOURCE: AUTHOR

dispute became a Gordian knot as it spread from the local level to embrace key movements in Ghana's political development through the decade, including the transition from one-party rule to a return to multi-party politics. As such, its unravelling provides insights into state formation continuities amidst radical political change at the centre. In February 1966, for example, the country experienced a coup led by the military and the National Liberation Council (NLC). This overthrew the one-party state and the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) under President Kwame Nkrumah. Following the coup, the NLC lifted a ban imposed by the CPP on political party formation. A new constitution was written, and the country returned to parliamentarianism with multiparty elections held in August 1969. These were won by Kofi Busia and the Progress Party, but in January 1972, the country was rocked again as Busia himself was ousted in a second coup, again driven by the NLC. The NLC subsequently morphed into the Supreme Military Council (SMC), withdrew the 1969 constitution, and halted the democratic experiment (Boafo-Arthur 2001; Biswal 1992).

Military rule continued until 1979, when, in June, the SMC itself was ousted in a third coup, this one led by Flight Lieutenant J. J. Rawlings and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which proceeded to introduce another constitution.[37]

The considerable changes at the political centre reverberated at the local level and shaped the dispute in Kpandai. An unravelling of the struggle thus provides key insights into processes of continuity and change concerning structural power and local agency through a decade of political upheaval. Specifically, it tells of how colonially supported powers and discursive constructions of relationships between traditional and modern institutions impacted on local democratization and limited the manoeuvrability of the historically marginalized Nawuri, at the same time as conditioning their mobilization. We see therefore how structural power conditions the social field of action through discourse, laws, and practice to permit and support some kinds of socio-cultural organization while simultaneously limiting and outlawing the formation of others.

The dispute commenced with the death of the Gonja Chief of Kpandai in February 1968. Nawuri leaders claimed they had a historical right of inclusion in the decision making for a successor and objected when a candidate was put forward by senior Gonja chiefs without their consultation. The initial objections were based on a history of animosities between Nawuri and the proposed candidate's family. Despite the framing of the dispute as purely 'traditional' by government, there were many material dimensions as well, because the position enjoyed central positions in local government institutions with the authority to decide on, and influence, a range of resource-distributing mechanisms. These included job positions, agricultural extension services, the awarding of contracts, tendering and procurements, the ability to set land rents, taxes, levies, and rates (for example for marriages and funerals), the granting of building permission, hunting licenses, and the right to rule on the punishment of offenders charged with breaching chiefs' jurisdictions. Thereby, the position of Chief of Kpandai was critical to upholding a form of tributary mode of production and the structuring of a situation, where agriculture was based overwhelmingly on subsistence, where ethnically defined elites extracted a cut of the surplus in the name of customary homage, and where the development of land markets was controlled (at least officially) to keep 'traditional' authority intact.

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37   For an overview of political events at the centre, see Owusu, 1989; Biswal, 1992; Boafo-Arthur, 2001.

Nawuri resentment against the candidate and his family stretched back to at least 1964, with complaints of extortion, nepotism, and the appropriation of public goods for private gain, all of which were possible because of the family's alleged dominance over local government in Kpandai at the time. Still, the proposed candidate was elevated to be Chief of Kpandai with the backing of the highest Gonja figure, the Gonja Paramount Chief. In turn, Nawuri argued for respect of the democratic principles behind their traditions and lobbied for another Gonja candidate. In efforts to resolve a brewing stand-off, public servants adopted the ontology of colonial administration and the idea that traditions and customs were clearly identifiable and fixed, accordingly ruling that Nawuri had no right in the matter of selecting the chief because of their traditional allegiances to Gonja overlords (Dixon 1955). In effect, this ruling reproduced the social field of action where Gonja traditional institutions were fundamentally unaccountable to Nawuri and outside the reach of secular government and any emerging democratization objectives.

In defiance, Nawuri initiated a traditional ceremony of their own and appointed their preferred candidate. This took advantage of uncertainties and disagreements between different state officials as to what the correct tradition was, and it succeeded in creating divides between rival Gonja sub-groups. Power vested in tradition was thereby evident as different social, political, and cultural configurations were inadvertently drawn into affirming and negating various versions of the past to justify access to resources and positions in the present, and in the belief that it was possible to solve the dispute with a correct identification of past practices. With this, it was universally accepted that fixed understandings of tradition were *the* means to rationalize society and increase the coherence of otherwise fluid social actions. Conversely, there is no evidence that points to any actors airing misgivings about how agency vested in traditional laws and practice itself only served to fuel contention and the production of competing understandings. This failure to problematize the meanings and roles assigned to tradition in modern political institution building points, therefore, to the ability of structural power to orchestrate the social setting. This is also evident as 'traditional affairs' – as codified in Ghanaian law at the time (and continuing up to the present) – means that any matters related to the appointment of chiefs are off-limits to non-traditional actors such as civil administrators, public servants, and officials.

As such, tradition was something one had to argue with, but which one could not so easily argue about. To recall, this demarcation between ostensibly 'modern' and 'traditional' affairs was institutionalized by the British colonial power to ensure social stability. The discursive and practical separation was retracted on Ghana's independence in 1957 by Nkrumah, with the politicization of

the appointments and removals of chiefs. After Nkrumrah's overthrow, however, the demarcation was established anew in the 1969 constitution (Stacey 2014). In practice, this confirmation enabled influential actors to accumulate power by positioning themselves as exclusive experts in local traditional affairs to influence local politics. And at the same time, the same influential actors used access and influence over modern political institutions to ensure their traditional interests were protected there, and to ward off interference in traditional matters by 'outsider' public servants. As a continuation of the colonial period, therefore, the reintroduction of the separation of modern and traditional affairs in 1969 was inherently flawed, because it failed to recognize that agency vested in one version of 'tradition' while closing off all others was in fact a product of modern political decision making and amounted to convenient, politically constructed intervention.

With the lifting of the ban on political parties in May 1969, the protagonists aligned along party lines for elections in Kpandai, with Nawuri and supporters canvassing for the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL), and their opponents for the pro-chief Progress Party. Nawuri strength and support for the Gonja chief they appointed was reflected in the NAL winning the constituency with the Nawuri dissident Joseph K. E. Mbimgadong as MP. Still, the chieftaincy dispute dragged on until November 1970, when the sudden death of the Nawuri-supported chief resulted in his opponent gaining the seat as Chief of Kpandai. The new Prime Minister, Busia, was informed that the dispute was now solved and that 'the Nawuris were in no way connected with the case[sic]' (NRG 8/2/171). In that way, the role of Nawuri in the affairs of Gonja traditional politics was systematically omitted from the official view. This was despite the Nawuri-supported Gonja candidate ruling in Kpandai throughout the dispute, successfully challenging the decisions of state institutions, undertaking different customary tasks, and enjoying substantial local support. Formally, however, Nawuri continued to have limited influence over the rules of the polity they lived in, and were excluded from positions of traditional authority. In this way, the state recognized Gonja traditional institutions, which were created by former governments, enjoyed a productive path trajectory, and continued to enjoy the ability to influence the decisions of local government and once more to define traditional affairs in their favour (Weir 2006). The state-recognized Gonja traditional institutions continued to enjoy the ability to affirm traditions in their favour, through which power was drawn and from which rivals were excluded, but which also conditioned the social mobilization of opponents. Legitimacy vested in versions of 'tradition' upheld ethnically defined sovereignty and dismissed other histories as false.

7   Democratization and Exclusion 1990–2020

The Nawuri continued their struggle to rewrite local history and gain recognition of their chiefs as Ghana experienced broader processes of political stability and democratization. The root causes of structural inequality as based on assertions of tradition in formal state law that negated Nawuri agency sparked land-related ethnic fighting between Gonja and Nawuri in the Kpandai area in 1991, and claimed at least 19 lives.[38] The conflict resulted in the ousting of the incumbent Gonja chief of Kpandai, the seizure of Gonja land and houses by Nawuri combatants, and the emergence of competing groups of Nawuri traditional leaders who jostled to take charge of the town and gain control over land. Following the ethnic fighting, a government report, the so-called Ampiah Report ('Report of the committee of inquiry into the Gonja, Nawuri, and Nanjuros dispute to Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings Head of State and Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council') recommended that Nawuri chiefs gain formal recognition to erase ethnically defined inequality, but this and other pro-Nawuri recommendations in the report did not materialize in practice (Ampiah 1991; Stacey 2015).

In the years following the conflict an internal Nawuri dispute developed over the selection processes for Nawuri chiefs. A central point of contention here was (and remains) control over land in the town centre and rights to sell plots of land for development. One faction comprises supporters of a proclaimed Nawuri 'Paramount Chief' who wishes to seek reconciliation with the Gonja and return their property seized in the 1991 conflict. An opposing anti-Gonja group of Nawuri hold control over land in the centre of Kpandai town and reject Gonja claims to the area outright. Thus the most recent era of intra- and inter-ethnic conflict reflects an underlying shift bought about by the inability of Gonja to continue a tributary mode of production based on the extraction of surplus from Nawuri, to a capitalist mode of production where 'traditional' Nawuri groups compete to define rights to land in order to sell, profit from, and establish new power relationships, and where capital derived from land enables the remaking of claims to authority based on tradition.

Ghana transitioned to democratic rule in 1992 with a new constitution and multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections in 1996. Still, the structural divide between recognized and non-recognized traditional authorities has continued in subtler and more blurred forms. This is because, as a

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38   The north of Ghana experienced a series of ethnic conflicts in the late 1980s to mid-1990s. See Jönsson 2007; Tonah 2007.

continuation of colonial policy and the trajectory of state law since, the 1992 Republic of Ghana Constitution formally separated chieftaincy affairs from modern, formal political development. Party political involvement in matters of chieftaincy was proscribed (as it was in the 1969 constitution), chiefs were barred from canvassing on party political platforms, and traditional institutions gained constitutional protection. For Nawuri, the legal set-up means that their calls for recognition of their chiefs are directed to Gonja traditional institutions.

Today, interactions between state officials and different Nawuri traditional authorities are pragmatic and influenced by state officials' need to develop productive relations with the powerful but non-recognized local chiefs. On the one hand, state officials need to access powerful Nawuri traditional actors to facilitate local development and increase state legitimacy. But on the other, they are wary not to get drawn into the ever-present debates about Nawuri native status and questions of who the 'correct' chief is. As such, public recognition by a state official of one Nawuri chief or other always risks allegations of undermining the status of others and inciting protest (Stacey 2015). As a senior local government official in Kpandai put it: 'we have to constantly massage all the chiefs so as not to upset anyone' (Interview: 12 December 2009). Nevertheless, the historical dispute resurfaced with the demarcation of a new district and the creation of a new district assembly in Kpandai as an element of democratic local government reform in 2008, with Nawuri hoping to gain traditional representation on the new council (Stacey 2015). Yet the constitutional principle of separating modern and traditional affairs means that, formally, the Kpandai area is still under the traditional authority of the Gonja Traditional Council and the administrative demarcation of the new district's boundary is not to undermine any Gonja traditional jurisdictions (Brobbey 2008). Meanwhile, the position of Gonja Chief of Kpandai has not been occupied in Kpandai since the 1991 conflict.

Thus the discursive power of tradition continues and has in many ways eclipsed the political, administrative and democratic developments as it structures the situation by defining what is, and what is not, possible for different groups and actors. The Nawuri are unable to gain traditional representation on the new district assembly because they were not recognized as chiefs and the institution with the mandate to bestow recognition – the Gonja Traditional Council – refused to provide formal recognition to them. Further, and following the first local elections in the new district in 2008, the historical experiences of Nawuri exclusion resurfaced because their relatively low numbers translated into limited representation based on ballot box logic. Accordingly Nawuri interpreted local government reform as reproducing their ethnic exclusion.

In turn, public servants and state officials became increasingly embroiled in the historical contentions around tradition and found it almost impossible to maintain neutrality. In the first years of the new local government the district assembly executive therefore chose not to involve any of the competing Nawuri chiefs directly in assembly affairs, and decided, in the name of protecting public order, not to allow speeches by the warring chiefs at cutting of the sod ceremonies (a respected tradition) so as to avoid accusations that all land-related developments involved one chief or another's contested land claims.

Yet at the same time the vying chiefs instrumentalized almost any interaction with the district assembly executive to claim recognition over opponents, or to accuse public officials of bias. Accordingly, while public officials endeavoured to stay on the right side of competing Nawuri chiefs and outside the contentious field of tradition, traditional actors instrumentalized social interactions to claim traditional status and gain influence enabling them to control and distribute land. Tradition continued, therefore, as a discursive point which defined a contentious social field of action to both include and exclude groups and to organize social settings. Indeed, the situation in the new district resembled Dennis Austin's astute description of the political situation in Ghana over 50 years ago where: 'tradition became a bottomless well of uncertain practice from which endless arguments could be drawn to justify whatever was thought desirable in current practice' (Austin 1964: 34). Today, to try and avoid the contentious arena around tradition, the assembly executive highlights the Nawuri chiefs' secular credentials – their knowledge of the locality, political experience, networking skills, ability to cooperate, and developmental ambitions. In a novel way, therefore, officials have come to recognize Nawuri chiefs without admitting recognition of their traditional credentials. All the while, however, discourses of tradition are reproduced in numerous ways through public reverence paid to the chiefs and meanings vested in Nawuri customs through ceremonies, everyday social practices, relations, behaviours, and displays. Social interactions between Nawuri chiefs and state officials have also shaped new unequal social categories within the Nawuri themselves: Some actors have gained influence over local government decision making and the ability to position themselves as land custodians and actors whom the assembly must consult to access land for development. In turn, this has led to Nawuri fragmentation, with outbreaks of violence, skirmishes, lengthy land-related litigation between different sub-groups, public arguments about the credentials of different traditional leaders, and accusations against state officials who 'meddle' in traditional affairs. In Kpandai today, contending Nawuri traditional actors continue, therefore, to debate who should rightfully be recognized and who should not, and to make claims accordingly. This is not directed towards

gaining the ability to extract labour and agricultural surplus, as it was in the past, but towards control over land in the centre of town, where prices are increasing, the population is growing, and there are new gains to be made from assertions of traditional authority. A key part of the contention around the control of land is the continuation of efforts to rewrite the colonially-initiated versions of local tradition and history that underpin Nawuri exclusion. As such, all Nawuri sub-groups continue to experience the exclusionary effects of structural power because, from the state's perspective, they remain unrecognized traditional authorities. As we saw in the opening vignette, the conjuncture of historical exclusion and demands for recognition continue to drive the production of Nawuri chieftaincy and traditions as socio-cultural institutions with unique customs, symbols, and norms. Communities develop leadership around chieftaincy because, since the colonial period, formal state law has vested agency in tradition and traditional institutions. Hence, unique traditions are created to affirm what a group stands for and to what it lays claim.

8   Conclusion

The chapter builds on Wolf's understanding of structural power as both organizing and orchestrating social and political settings, as structuring fields of action, as influencing manifestations of agency, and as enabling and limiting the direction and articulations of societal organization. To understand the workings of structural power the chapter investigated the vesting of agency in tradition and its influence on social organization in law and practice, and processes of exclusion in East Gonja from about 1930 to the present. The ability of structural power to define and orchestrate social settings meant that Nawuri established their own chiefs and asserted their own histories in their struggles against state law that recognized others and defined the group as unequal and without its own history. The production of Nawuri cultural-political institutions around chieftaincy with an emphasis on native status relates directly to translocal forces and the group's historical meetings and contentions with institutions and organizations that extended well beyond their immediate ethnographic context, but nevertheless impacted heavily on their personal sphere and on meanings that people knew as authentic and defined as their own (Neveling and Steur 2018, 2; Gledhill 2005). Initially, the vesting of agency in particular versions of tradition by the British administering authority created ethnically defined inequality, with privileged groups enjoying the ability to extract rent, tribute, and labour, and control the distribution of land. This process endeavoured to fix colonial ideas of a tributary mode of production as

based in the ancient past, but for Nawuri it was experienced as a radical narrowing of their ability to shape the polity in which they lived and 'the direction in which the play [could] go' (Wolf 1959, 173). The Nawuri struggle for recognition and the making of their own chiefs therefore exemplifies culture as a series of processes, social actions, interactions, and confrontations with power and the 'ambiguities of inherited forms [and] new evaluations of valencies of them [and where] new forms more expressive of their interests [are established] to create wholly new forms to answer changed circumstances' (Wolf 1982, 387). Accordingly, Nawuri institutionalized essentialist ideas of identity and culture as a group-in-the-making and as organized around chiefs. The emerging group also experienced internal division as conditioned by their meetings with broader forces in 'historically changing, imperfectly bounded, multiple and branching social alignments' (Wolf 1982, 387). As such, Nawuri fragmentation in recent decades and the production of sub-groups with opposing cultures around chieftaincy exemplify processes of differentiation arising from political change that has bought about crisis and disrupted objectives to establish group coherence, common history, and stability. As such, experiences of crisis have impacted on the socio-cultural and organizational situation (Ghani 1995). The production of cultural characteristics as an open and unfinished process serves multiple purposes including defining the group, establishing historical significance, institutions of leadership, and relations with ancestors and the spiritual world. These are efforts to use tradition and history to establish certainty amidst indeterminacy and as people experience disruptions bought about by political developments (Procter 2004; McGee and Warms 2013). The Nawuri struggle shows, then, how 'the people who claim history as their own and the people to whom history has been denied emerge as participants in the same historical trajectory' (Wolf 1982). This plays out as the group forms through struggle to make sense of and gain control over a social field of action that *demands* they gain recognition to thrive. But, at the same time, the social field of action provides legitimacy for a much broader system of rule that has long defined the Nawuri as unequal, and which means that recognition as an autonomous group with their own history and traditions is unattainable (Rabasa 2005).

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