

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND POLITICS: A BIOGRAPHY OF  
ALHAJI ALIU MAHAMA, 1946-2012**

**ASIMAH KASSIM**

**7160200001**

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of the requirement for the award of  
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**July, 2019**

## **DECLARATION**

### **STUDENT DECLARATION**

**I, ASIMAH KASSIM**, declare that except for references to other works which have been identified and duly acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my own original research, and it has been submitted, either in whole or in part, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:.....

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### **SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the preparation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: **DR. D. E. K. BAKU**

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the Alhaji Aliu Mahama Foundation and my family for their support and cooperation

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

NPP	New Patriotic Party
NDC	National Democratic Congress
CPP	Convention People's Party
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
NLC	National Liberation Council
NSU	Northern Students Union
RTU	Real Tamale United
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the life and times of Alhaji Aliu Mahama - an engineer, entrepreneur, and statesman from 1946 to 2012. The purpose of this work is to offer a detailed understanding of Alhaji Aliu Mahama's life with an emphasis on his struggles, works, successes, and failures. The study revealed that Alhaji Aliu Mahama was a disciplinarian and a determined person who achieved an uninterrupted education from basic to tertiary. The study also revealed that Alhaji Aliu Mahama had a dramatic rise in his professional career as an engineer and a private entrepreneur. In theory, he had undergone rigorous professional discipline. The thesis further revealed that Alhaji Aliu Mahama was not a novice in politics. One most important observation that came out from this study is that Aliu's appointment as a running mate and later Vice President in election 2000 was more of a coincidence than design. The study discovered that Alhaji Aliu Mahama was not interested in becoming a Vice President of the New Patriotic Party and that it was the maneuverings of J. A. Kufour that brought Aliu to the position. This is a qualitative study that relied extensively on oral data. Information was generated through oral interviews from Aliu Mahama's family members, classmates, friends, and elderly citizens, as well as his contemporaries in business and politics. Additional data were solicited from Alhaji Aliu Mahama's personal diaries, graphics, funeral tributes, and archival information. Secondary materials including books, journal articles, and public lectures relating to Aliu's life and political activities were used to corroborate the information obtained from the primary data.



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background to the Study

This thesis examines the life and times of Alhaji Aliu Mahama - an engineer, entrepreneur, and politician – from 1946 to 2012. It touches on several of the seminal moments that shaped his life and career in relation to the historical context of Ghana's development trajectory. Aliu Mahama occupies an important place in the annals of modern Ghana, not least to the majority of the citizens of northern Ghana whom he inspired.

The Northern Region has a complex geography and historical past. Until 1983, there were Northern and Upper regions. It was the Upper Region that was divided into Upper East and Upper West regions. Northern Region comprised the lands occupied by the Mole-Dagbani states (Mamprugu, Dagbon, and Nanung) and Gonja land. Although the Gold Coast Colony (Coastal area) had virtually come under the British Crown by 1874, the Vast Savanna Land-Mass ('up country'), at times, referred to as the 'Ashanti Hinterlands, or the Northern Territories was left out of this colonial raid.<sup>1</sup> According to David Kimble, "there was no general awareness in the colony of the northern conditions and problems. The geographical features of the dry Orchard-Savanna belt so sharply distinct from the rain-forest area and the physical conditions of life were sufficient to emphasize the isolation of the region."<sup>2</sup>

The area began to appear in British administrative documents from 1892 when Ekem Ferguson, a famous and knowledgeable Government Surveyor from Anomabu, (a coastal Fanti town) was sent to secretly broker trade and friendship treaties with the

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<sup>1</sup> H.B. Martison, *The Hidden History of Konkomba Wars in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Masta Publishing, 1995), 23

<sup>2</sup> David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: 1830-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 533

chiefs and people of the northern territories.<sup>3</sup> The treaties he concluded contained a clause that forbade the chiefs from making similar treaties with other European powers without the prior consent of the British Crown. The primary aim of the British was to forestall a possible German expansion and to announce their interest in the so-called Neutral Zone and protect such interest against French incursions from the North and North-West.<sup>4</sup>

Once the British had assured themselves that there would not be external threats, vis-à-vis their colonial standing in the 'Ashanti Hinterlands', they annexed this vast tract of territory in 1901 and named it Northern Territories in distinction from the Gold Coast colony and Ashanti.<sup>5</sup> It is, therefore, important to note that by January 1902, the Gold Coast comprised of three separately administered territories, the Colony, Ashanti, and the Northern Territories. Major A. H. Morris was appointed as the Chief Commissioner of the 'Northern Territories.'<sup>6</sup>

Economic activities in Northern Ghana were not affected by the political rivalries that occurred in the Gold Coast during this period. The traditional systems of agriculture, with all their limitations, remained unchanged. Cultivation was overall still geared towards production for home or immediate local consumption, except that cotton was occasionally produced on a scale large enough to yield a surplus for export. However,

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<sup>3</sup> PRADD/A/RG3/3/47, Northern Teachers Bulletin, p. 2. Ekem Ferguson was chosen for the task because of his knowledge of Twi, Hausa, as well as of the people. George Ekem Ferguson was born at Anomabu in 1864, and was the grandson of Robert Ferguson, at one time a government medical officer. He was educated at Cape Coast, and later at the Wesleyan High School at Freetown, and on his return to the Gold Coast worked for a short time as a teacher. In 1881, at the age of 17, he entered the civil service, becoming a shorthand clerk to the Governor. Apart from his work, he showed promise and interest in other matters, and very early in his service produced a map of the Gold Coast, showing the recognized tribal boundaries. His talents as a surveyor were recognized by the authorities, and in 1889 he went on a government scholarship to England where he studied at the Royal School of Mines. On his return to the Gold Coast, he was sent to Northern and Ashanti on a survey and political work, during which he made a treaty with the Northern Chiefs

<sup>4</sup> For the full list of the chiefs who signed the treaties with Ferguson, see H.B Martinson, *The Hidden-History of Konkomba Wars in Northern Ghana*. P 26, Kimble. P.465

<sup>5</sup> Northern Regional Archives Tamale, RAT/1/1200, Gazette Notice

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

these developments changed radically after the British took full control of the area. The Colonial Administration terminated the transit trade and discouraged the commercialization of cotton, groundnuts, and rice by providing no markets for producers.<sup>7</sup> Instead, they envisaged the Northern Territories as a labour recruitment zone, where they conscripted males and organized them into labour gangs to work in the southern parts of the nascent colony.

The policy of turning the northern territory into a labour pool marked the beginning of a trend whereby the males and later females from the north (often called 'Northerners') became periodic migrant laborers in the mines and cocoa farms in Ashanti and the southern parts of the colony. The trend persisted after independence. "Occasionally, young men from all over Northern Ghana were taken on a conducted tour of the gold mines, where they were highly impressed by the decent and higher standards of living enjoyed by the mine employees."<sup>8</sup>

Coupled with these was the psychological stigmatization of Northerners. Indeed, Chief Commissioner, W.J.A. Jones admitted that the people of the North were regarded as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.'<sup>9</sup> Saaka also noted that the 'only resources in the region were its manpower.'<sup>10</sup> All these came into being after the colonial administration had concluded in response to expatriate demand for labourers that 'the Northern Territories ought to form a valuable recruiting ground.'<sup>11</sup>

The 'North' was largely rural, unaffected by the urbanization wave in the 'south'. The social conditions of the north were no better as the area lacked the major indicators of

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<sup>7</sup> K. B. Dickson, "Background to the Problem of Economic Development in Northern Ghana," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 58, no. 4 (1968): 686

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> B. G. Der, "The Development of Education in Northern Ghana during the Colonial Era," *Journal of the Institute of Education* 3 (1994): 113

<sup>10</sup> Yakuba-Saaka A, "Evolution of Political Consciousness in the North" (M.A. diss., University of Ghana, 1972)

<sup>11</sup> Nii-K Plange, "Underdevelopment in Northern Ghana: Natural Causes or Colonial Capitalism?" *Review of African Political Economy* 15, no.16 (1979): 12

development like education, social services, and health facilities. On the other hand, diseases and gross levels of poverty and famine were common.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Northerners were believed to lack 'intellectual capacity' and thus 'took no interest in commercial possibilities' which could have helped develop their region. Rather, they preferred to maintain their primitive habits.'<sup>13</sup>

Within this context, the arguments have been that the socio-economic and political conditions of Northern Ghana were a consequence of the absence of individuals with the 'need to achieve'. Thus, by the late-1940s, the region had been sufficiently proletarianized that it was impossible for the active male population to provide other means of earning their keep.<sup>14</sup> The latent logic, therefore, was that migration to work in the mines and the cocoa farms in southern Ghana were to serve as the surest means of sustaining the male population in the North. Despite these difficulties, some individuals defied the colonial social structure by becoming labourers in the cocoa farms and the mines in southern Ghana and developed themselves to become key actors in their communities and influential members on the national scene. One such individual was Alhaji Aliu Mahama.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

There is a growing academic and popular interest in the writing of the biographies of political and other public figures in Ghana. Currently available are the biographies of past presidents and prime ministers of the Republic of Ghana, namely Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (1951-1966); Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia (1969-1972); Hilla Limann (1979-1981); John Jerry Rawlings (1981- 2000); John Agyekum Kufour (2001- 2008); and

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<sup>12</sup> For details of disease outbreaks in this region see, Sylvester Gundona's work, "A Study of health conditions and disease control in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1897-1956. (M.Phil. diss., University of Ghana, 1999)

<sup>13</sup> Saaka A, "Evolution," 21

<sup>14</sup> Plange, "Underdevelopment."13

John Evans Atta Mills (2009-2012). So far, scholars have not devoted attention to writing about other seemingly lower ranks but very influential public figures, particularly the roles of the successive vice presidents in shaping the history of Ghana. One such public figure whose life, career and impact need scholarly attention due to his immense contributions to the socio-economic and political development of Ghana is Alhaji Aliu Mahama who was vice president of Ghana from 2001 to 2008.

Despite his accomplishments as a civil engineer, entrepreneur, statesman, and one of Ghana's longest-serving Vice Presidents, very little is known about him. Though Alhaji Aliu Mahama was not a very imaginative man, he had a practical, steady mind—a quality that was necessary to give stability and societal discipline to our new nation. He produced the new ideology of discipline and implemented it. A trait of a leader who lived his entire life as a moral crusader. What I seek to do in this study is to examine the life history of Alhaji Aliu Mahama. In doing so, I situate the analysis within the dynamics of the socio-economic and political conditions in Ghana to show how these conditioned and shaped his life. As argued by Leckie, “as men and women, we do not simply live out the life of our species. Instead, we display a wide variety of native abilities, and our personalities and characters are shaped by our consciousness of our race and gender, environmental influences such as the class we belong to, our early education, indoctrination, and the choices we make.”<sup>15</sup> The research answers the following questions: What guiding principles underpinned Alhaji Aliu Mahama’s upbringing, and how did these shape his adult life? How did the socio-political and economic conditions of Ghana between 1946 to 2012 shaped and conditioned Alhaji Aliu’s upbringing and his future endeavors? Why did Alhaji

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<sup>15</sup> Shirley A. Leckie, “Biography Matters: Why Historians need well-Crafted biography more than ever,” in *Writing Biography: Historians and Their Craft*, ed. Lloyd E. Ambrosius (Lincoln and London, 2004): 16

Aliu Mahama choose private business over employment in the public sector? What experience and quality did he bring to the position of Vice Presidency and the political and democratic development of Ghana?

## **1.2 Conceptual Considerations**

My approach is historical biography. Biography is, without a doubt, a very popular form of historical writing. Scholars who have reflected on its functions, uses, and forms seem to agree that biography presents challenges to historians, social scientists, and writers in general, but also that it has the potential to produce valuable knowledge and insights. Garcia classifies biographies into three types. The first is the scholarly chronicle that is simply a compilation and recitation of facts related to the life of an individual. The second is the critical biography, which has the objective of analyzing and explaining rather than describing. Finally, there is the 'pure' or literary biography, an 'attempt to create life through the magic of language that seeks to illuminate universal truths about humankind through the sufferings and triumphs of a single human being.'<sup>16</sup>

A Biography has been used by Social scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists as a tool for understanding socio-political and economic realities, the extent to which the life of an individual can help them explain society.<sup>17</sup> In their approaches, however, they often concerned themselves with life histories narrated by individuals and their values as sources for social study without situating their arguments or subjects within the broader socio-economic and political situations at a time.

On the contrary, historical biographers since the 1950s have always followed the Leon Edel methodological approach in studying their subjects. He saw the

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<sup>16</sup> Esperanza Brizuela-Garcia, "The Past Never Stays Behind: Biographical Narrative and African Colonial History," *Journal of Historical Biography* 2 (Autumn 2007): 64-65

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

biographer's task as excavating the private, arguing that the hidden self of a biographical subject, includes personality, character, and 'inner mental core'.<sup>18</sup> This methodological approach replaced the focus on the individual and agency to embrace the systematic explanation and analysis of historical phenomena in terms of general patterns, external factors, and structural formation. Historians have realized that the study of the agency requires a careful examination of the intricate ways in which broad historical processes determine the actions of individuals and vice versa.<sup>19</sup> In line with this approach, this study attempts not just to give a narration of Aliu's life, but to make an analysis and interpretation of his life and work within the broader context of historical developments in Ghana.

### **1.3 Historiographical Review**

The existing literature on biography as a study of personal history in Ghana makes very scanty or no reference whatsoever to the life and times of Alhaji Aliu Mahama, although many studies have been done on political leaders of Ghana. The first political biography on a Ghanaian leader was published in 1996 by Kwaku Danso-Boafo. His work focused on Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia. In this work, Danso-Boafo argues that Busia failed in his political life because he could not shape his political environment and in turn, was shaped by it.<sup>20</sup> The book traced the life of Busia and his contribution to the restoration of democracy in Ghana. However, he focused on Busia's political life without analyzing the socio-economic and political circumstances within which such a leader emerged and operated. Yet, his work provides useful insights on the formation of the Danquah-Busia-Dombo Tradition which Alhaji Aliu Mahama contributed to its reorganization in the early 1990s.

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<sup>18</sup> Volker, Depkat, *The Challenges of Biography: European-American Reflections*, 46

<sup>19</sup> Brizuela-Garcia, "*The Past Never Stays Behind*," 66

<sup>20</sup> Kwaku Danso-Boafo, *The Political Biography of Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1996)

Another ambitious contribution to biography by Danso-Boafo is on Rawlings. In this book, Danso described J. J. Rawlings as someone who started his political career as a dictator but ended it as a democrat. Relying heavily on newspaper and oral interviews and situating his study within a broad political and socio-economic change in Ghana, Danso-Boafo provides an assessment of Rawling's life, attitude, values, and ideas. What is clear in Danso's work is that he provided an in-depth understanding of other useful themes such as democratic transitions and military regimes in Ghana.<sup>21</sup>

June Milner's work on Kwame Nkrumah which was published in 1999 describes Nkrumah as a leading activist and theoretician of the African Renaissance and Pan-Africanism. For the first time in a biography of Nkrumah, information is provided about all the books written by him. The circumstances under which they were written are explained, their contents examined, appraisal made of their significance, and continuing impact on political developments in Africa and the diaspora. This is an authentic moving account of the life and works of Kwame Nkrumah.<sup>22</sup> The usefulness of Milner's work lies in the fact that she examined his subject within the broader context of the socio-political struggles in Africa. Equally important on Nkrumah is the work by David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy*, published in 2007. In this book, Rooney argues that Kwame Nkrumah was a man of vision whose achievements were undermined by the inadequacy of his administration.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Rooney situated the life and vision of Kwame Nkrumah within the socio-economic and political situation at the time. One key observation in this book is that it is appropriate to look at the negative side of the personal alongside the positive side.

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<sup>21</sup> Kwaku Danso-Boafo, *J.J. Rawlings and the Democratic Transition in Ghana* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana University Press, 2012)

<sup>22</sup> June Milner, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Biography* (London: Panaf Books, 2001)

<sup>23</sup> David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy* (Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007), 11



Success in meeting the leadership challenge is influenced by the balance between the positive and negative. This is good work and the approach will serve as a guide to my work.

Another contribution to the historiography of biography in Ghana is the work of Agyemang-Duah on the biography of J. A. Kufuor published in 2006. In this study, Agyemang-Duah examines Kufuor's life from his birthplace in Kumasi and his membership of the Royal family of the Oyoko clan and how his family background shaped his attitude and values. The study again discusses the political environment within which Kufuor was brought up and the various roles Kufuor played in reorganizing the Danqua-Busia Tradition. He further discusses the various roles Aliu Mahama played as a Vice-President during Kufuor's eight years in office.<sup>24</sup> Conspicuously missing in this book, however, was the fact that Aliu had been a stalwart in the NPP even before he was chosen as a Vice-President; a fact widely captured by Kennedy in his work titled, *Chasing the Elephant into the Bush: the Politics of Compliance*. Quoting the words of the then Party Administrator, Mr. Antwi-Agyei, Kennedy narrates how "Mr. Da Rocha dispatched former General Secretary, Agyenim Boateng and Mr. Antwi-Agyei to the north in 1991 to quietly rouse the party in anticipation that the ban on politics would be lifted. It was Alhaji Aliu Mahama who met them, arranged for their accommodation and bore most of their expenses regarding the trip. Reportedly, he quietly supported the party financially throughout the nineties".<sup>25</sup> It is not surprising therefore that he was chosen to serve as a running mate even though he had not publicly contested any position within the party.

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<sup>24</sup> Ivor Agyemang-Duah, *Between Faith and History* (UK: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited, 2006)

<sup>25</sup> Arthur Kennedy, *Chasing the Elephant into the Bush the Politics of Compliancy* (USA: Bloomington Indiana, 2009), 58.

Some books have documented in passing, Alhaji Aliu's political life. Donkoh Fordwor in his book titled "The Danquah-Busia Tradition in the Politics of Ghana" examines the factors which accounted for Aliu's inability to win the presidential candidate slot of his party in 2007. He argues that Aliu was kept so much under the shadow of Kufuor for most of the eight years of their term that it had not been possible for him to show his capabilities except in only a few situations.<sup>26</sup> What Fordwor failed to acknowledge is that both the President and his Vice president operated under defined constitutional boundaries. Again, Fordwor's work examines the life of Aliu during his period as a Vice President without discussing his contributions to the party. Asirifi gives a historical record of Ghana's long struggle for independence and the successive administrations since attaining nation-state. In the concluding chapter, Asirifi analyzed the successes chalked by the Kufuor regime.<sup>27</sup> This chapter reads as though Aliu Mahama did not exist at all as Vice President to Kufuor. Meanwhile, Aliu Mahama contributed in several ways in bringing the party to power and contributed to the party's ability to survive the eight years in power.

Martinson views the nomination of Aliu Mahama as the Vice President in the run-up to the 2000 general elections as a strategic and a well-calculated plan by the leadership of the party. He defines the combination of Aliu Mahama and Kufuor as a political symbiosis in which the political players or partners emerged from the different political, social, and cultural background; but for the sake of political dominance of the Nation-State, and economic advantages have collectively decided to formally forge a vibrant Political-Economic synthesis with some Western Oligarchies

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<sup>26</sup> Kantinka K. Donkoh Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition in the Politics of Ghana* (Accra: Unimax Macmillan Limited, 2010), 288

<sup>27</sup> Asirifi-Danquah, *History of Ghana from President Nkrumah to President Kufuor* (Ghana: Norcento, 2007), 243

for the "Assumed Well-Being" of their people and the Nation-State.<sup>28</sup> Although Martinson provides us with valid information about Aliu Mahama, his early life and entrepreneurial endeavors were not captured.

Roger Gocking argues that Aliu Mahama was chosen as Vice-President mainly because of his wealth. Gocking maintains that though there were public expressions of support for Kufuor, there was little in the way of financial support and Kufuor's attempts to raise money from Ghanaian communities in the United Kingdom and the United States were not particularly successful. This thus, informed Kufuor's decision to pick Alhaji Aliu Mahama who was a civil engineer and relatively unknown but was reputed to have money, which Kufuor's campaign needed badly.<sup>29</sup> Gocking's view has been corroborated by Kennedy who discusses Aliu Mahama's role as a party financier since the 1990s.<sup>30</sup> Contrary to Gocking and Kennedy's views, Ousman Kobo argues that Aliu was selected because the NPP wanted to win votes from the Zongo communities. He argues that the NPP lost the 1992 and 1996 elections to the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in part because of rumours that the party's leader, the late renowned historian, Professor Adu Boahen - had threatened to deport people of the Zongo if he won the 1992 election. Recognizing that losing the 'Zongo vote' might negatively affect NPP, the then NPP presidential candidate, John A. Kufuor avoided any remarks that might offend Zongo residents and that was why he selected Alhaji Aliu Mahama as Vice Presidential candidate for the 2000 general elections.<sup>31</sup> Two broad tendencies have emerged from this literature: the question of whether or not

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<sup>28</sup> H.B. Martinson, *The UP/NPP Tradition in the National Liberation Struggle: The True Story* (Accra: Masta Publishing, 2010), 84-89.

<sup>29</sup> Roger S. Gocking, *The History of Ghana* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 246.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur, *Chasing the Elephant*, 58

<sup>31</sup> Kobo Ousman, "'We Are Citizens Too': The Politics of Citizenship in Independent Ghana" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 48, no. 1 (2010): 69

Aliu was chosen because of his riches or religious background. Yet, others viewed his nomination with ethnic and regional lenses.

Bob Kelly and R. B. Bening argue that leading southerners perceive the political significance of a 'northern consciousness'. Political parties since the 1990s have been keen to 'balance their tickets' by having a northerner as the vice-presidential candidate alongside the southern leader. This explains the choice of the relatively unknown Aliu Mahama as the New Patriotic Party's vice-presidential candidate in 2000 and 2004, and Martin Amidu from the Builsa District in 2000 and Alhaji Mohammed Mumuni the MP for Kumbungu in 2004 as potential NDC vice-presidents.<sup>32</sup> Paul Nugent also viewed Aliu's selection as a strategy to liquidate the political monopoly enjoyed by the NDC. He argues that Kufuor was acutely aware of the Akan stereotype sticking to the shoes of the NPP and could therefore see even greater merit in selecting Alhaji Aliu Mahama who was a Dagomba, a major ethnic group in the North as his running mate.<sup>33</sup> Whatever the divergence in opinions, together, these works have contributed to deepening our understanding of how different scholars have given different interpretations on why Aliu Mahama was selected as a running mate to Kufuor in the run-up to the 2000 and 2004 general elections. This study seeks to contribute to the existing debates by situating the arguments within the broader context of the political situation in Ghana at the time.

Gbadamosi describes Aliu Mahama as a philanthropist and enthusiastic football fan. Gbadamosi recounted how he and Aliu Mahama, together with several others, came together to establish Real Tamale United. Gbadamosi acknowledged Aliu's self-

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<sup>32</sup> Bob Kelly and R. B. Bening, "Ideology, Regionalism, Self-Interest and Tradition: An Investigation into Contemporary Politics in Northern Ghana," *Journal of the International African Institute* 77, no. 2: 189

<sup>33</sup> Nugent Paul, "Ethnicity as an Explanatory Factor in the Ghana 2000 Elections" *African Issues* 29, no. ½: 4

effacing contribution to the Team at the time none of the Executives could do.<sup>34</sup> Gbadamosi's work due to its focus on his personal life, pays very little attention to Aliu Mahama's life. Even the little information provided deliberates only on Aliu's hobby to the neglect of his background and career.

The work by Carola Lentz & Jan Budniok titled "Ghana@50 – celebrating the nation: An eyewitness account from Accra" narrates the significance of the independence celebration and the various roles successive governments have played to maintain the peace of Ghana. As part of this work, the authors provided pictures of the presidents and their wives right from Nkrumah to Kufuor and a brief biography of them.<sup>35</sup> Conspicuously missing was Vice Presidents in Ghana. This obvious neglect of the Vice Presidents in Ghanaian history epitomizes what I describe as 'entrenched marginality of Vice Presidents within Ghanaian political history'. Meanwhile, Vice Presidents play pivotal roles in the political dispensation. Indeed, Article 60:6 of the 1992 constitution makes a vice president only a heartbeat away from the presidency. This article states that 'whenever the President dies, resigns or is removed from office, the Vice-President shall assume office as President for the unexpired term of office of the President with effect from the date of the death, resignation or removal of the President.'<sup>36</sup>

This impressive literature notwithstanding, little attention has been paid to a detailed life on Aliu Mahama. The position of the reviewed literature leaves out vital information needed for a deep understanding of the life of Aliu Mahama. This lacuna in historical research means that many important issues that need to be discussed concerning the life, vision and works of Aliu Mahama have remained obscured. What

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<sup>34</sup> Alhaji Rahim Gbadamosi, *Events in my Life*. Accra (Ghana: Black Mask Limited, 2016), 163-170.

<sup>35</sup> Lentz, Carola and Budniok Ghana@50 – Celebrating the Nation: An eyewitness account from Accra, Department of Anthropology and African Studies Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Forum 6, D-55099 Mainz, Germany, 2007.

<sup>36</sup> 1992 constitution of Ghana Article 60: 6.

I seek to do in this study is to explain the circumstances that shaped Aliu's life within the larger historical context of the socio-economic and political developments in Ghana.

This study is important because it will serve as a useful material to historians, researchers, politicians and the public in their bid to know more about Alhaji Aliu Mahama. The study will also contribute to the understanding of the socio-economic and political developments of Ghana and the contributions of Aliu Mahama to it.

#### **1.4 Methodology of the Study**

This is a qualitative study that relies extensively on oral data. Information was generated through oral interviews from Aliu Mahama's family members, classmates, friends and elderly citizens, as well as his contemporaries in business and politics. The researcher selected this group because they lived, worked, or had long-term relationships with Alhaji Aliu Mahama and therefore, had some valuable information about him. This first-hand information was valuable as they helped to fill the gap where documentary evidence is silent or not readily available. More importantly, they provided a sense of how people perceived and understood Alhaji Aliu Mahama. Additional data was gathered from Alhaji Aliu Mahama's diaries, newspapers, public lectures, funeral tributes as well as his personal written communication. Primary data also came from the Regional Archives in Tamale and the National Archives in Accra. Secondary materials including books and journal articles were consulted. Most of these secondary materials were retrieved from libraries in Ghana, which included The Osagyefo Library at the University of Education, Winneba, the North Campus Library also at the University of Education, Winneba and the Department of History Library at the University of Education, Winneba, the Balme Library, Legon and Northern Regional Library at Tamale.

Together, these sources helped shed light not only on the life and times of Alhaji Aliu Mahama but also highlight the situations in Ghana, particularly in the Northern region. For credibility and the avoidance of exaggeration and historical anachronism, the data was carefully reviewed, sorted, and categorized into topical themes. The analysis, synthesis and interpretations of data were done by way of comparing original literature review and primary data. With this approach, the research questions formulated to guide the study will be explained, supported or refuted based on the evidence gathered.

### **1.5 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction and it sets out the agenda for the study. The topic and questions to be investigated are presented, existing literature and research questions are presented, and justifications made for the thematic and methodological choices made regarding this thesis. Particular attention is given to the possibilities and limitations of biography as a scholarly and popular scientific genre, and as a historical method.

Chapter 2 provides the geographical, historical and social context of Alhaji Aliu Mahama's early life and careers in the Northern Territories. The chapter outlines the political, economic and social conditions that shaped his childhood, upbringing and education from the 1940s to the 1970s. Did he have special privileges relative to other children and youth of the North?

Chapter 3 examines Aliu's entrepreneurship life within the political and economic context of the two decades, from 1980 to 2000. The chapter examines Government-Business relations under the Rawlings era from the quasi-military regime to 2000. This discussion is a necessary background to foreground a discussion of Aliu's business exploit. Again, the chapter discusses Aliu Mahama's businesses and the role

of Aliu in reviving an ailing construction industry in Ghana. What expertise did he have, and what business did he set up? Why did he choose the private over employment in the public service? How did he get start-up capital? Particular attention is given to how the private sector policies of successive governments affected private entrepreneurship generally in Ghana and Aliu's business.

Chapter 4 examines Aliu's early political life. The political positions he contested, positions he occupied through nomination and political party affiliation from 1978-2000. Attention is given to Alhaji Aliu Mahama's contributions to the reorganization and activities of the Danquah-Busia-Dombo Tradition and later the New Patriotic Party in Ghana's Fourth Republic and how he suspended his private business and returned to public service as a politician. What was Aliu Mahama's political philosophy, affiliation and involvement in politics prior to 2000? Why was he chosen to partner the presidential candidate of the New Patriotic Party, the offshoot of the Danquah Busia-Dombo political tradition?

Chapter 5 addresses Aliu's political career from 2001 to 2009. His political career is analyzed against the backdrop of the fourth republican politics, as a Vice President. The chapter examines the major economic, political and social policies initiated to solve the mounting problems in the country at the time. Attention will be paid to how Aliu Mahama's private sector experiences and his disdain for indiscipline reflect his political life? The contest for flagbearship and desire to lead his party and to become President of Ghana after his tenure as Vice President (constitutionally possible).

Chapter 6 examined Aliu's life after eight years in office as a Vice-President. Attention is on his relationship with his family, party and businesses. Again, the chapter examines the death of Alhaji Aliu Mahama and his burial process as well as tributes rendered. What were his legacies and influence on the overall socio-economic



and political development in Ghana? His death and state burial are also discussed here.

Chapter seven provides a conclusion based on the arguments in the first chapter to prove that indeed Alhaji Aliu Mahama played a key role in the socio-economic and political developments of Ghana. It reviews the overall achievements of Alhaji Aliu Mahama as an engineer, politician and a disciplinarian.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses Aliu's childhood and upbringing in the Northern part of Ghana. Particular attention is given to the key guiding principles that underpinned his upbringing and how these shaped his adult life. Did he have special privileges relative to other children and youth of the Northern Territories?

Aliu Mahama was born on March 3, 1946, in Yendi in Eastern Dagbon in the then Northern Region of Ghana.<sup>37</sup> 1946 was a bad year for Dagbon. Locust invaded Dagbon that year at the beginning of the rainy season and ate every growing crop including green grass and leaves. Consequently, there was a famine. Very few households in Dagbon could afford a meal a day. It was during this period that white maize was introduced to Dagbon.<sup>38</sup> It was also the year the Northern Territories Council (NTC) was formed. The NTC was initially a 'chiefs' council and its establishment was in line with the long-held British view that political power in the West Africa territories, if it was to devolve at all, should be to the 'natural rulers of the people,' the chiefs.<sup>39</sup> It was to serve as a nerve centre for Northern opinion. The Council therefore tasked itself to secure constitutional safeguards for the chiefs and

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<sup>37</sup> There is a legend surrounding his birth that it delayed and was a source of worry to his parents. His father was, therefore, prompted to consult a soothsayer (prominent Mallam) in Yendi, who assured him that there would be a safe delivery of a baby boy who would grow up to be a great person in life. The soothsayer, however, cautioned that the prophecies would happen only if, the baby was named after his grandfather. On the seventh day after his birth, he was named after his grandfather Aliu in line with Islamic practice

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Alhaji Abdul Rahama, Zongo chief of Yendi and elder brother of Aliu Mahama, 13 January 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Ladouceur, Paul Andre, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana* (London: Longman, 1979), 87

people of the North and also to secure rapid development for the north in education, health, communication, social and administrative services before independence.<sup>40</sup>

Aliu Mahama was the son of a peasant farmer and chief of the Muslim community (Zongo Naa) in Yendi. His mother was a food vendor who sold porridge every morning at Yendi town. The name of Aliu's father was Mahama Aliu whilst his mother was Iddirisu Mariama. His father lived in Yendi but traced his patrilineal ancestry to the Hausa states in northern Nigeria whilst his mother hailed from Zabzugu, a suburb of Yendi. Both parents were Muslim but they also believed in Dagbon cultures and traditional worship. Their mother tongue was called Dagbani or Dagbanli.<sup>41</sup>

Aliu came from two large families, perhaps the largest in Yendi. This was because his ancestors were all chiefs and as Dagbon customs and traditions demanded, they married many wives. Some of them were survived by many children. Within the royal home of Aliu, record keeping of the family was in the hands of traditional historians known as tomtom beaters who chant and eulogizes members of the royal families and customary dignitaries of Dagbon, one of the earliest known kingdoms in West Africa.<sup>42</sup>

Aliu Mahama's father was considered wealthy by Northern Ghana standards in the 1940s because he was married to six wives, which was an acceptable practice among the Dagomba and other ethnic groups in Northern Ghana. These wives gave him

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<sup>40</sup> Bawumia, Alhaji Mumuni, *A Life in the Political History: Memiors of Alhaji Mumuni Bawumia* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 2004), 68

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*

<sup>42</sup> Dagbon was founded by Sitobu in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with Yanidabari in the west as its capital. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of Naa Titugri, the headquarters was moved to Yendi which has remained the seat of the Ya-Na, the king of the traditional Dagbon state. The town was divided into many sections, each headed by a divisional chief or elder. All minor traditional matters or disputes are adjudicated by the divisional chief, but all major matters go to the court of the Ya-Na for adjudication.<sup>42</sup> It was this ancient town that Aliu was born.

fifteen children, which was a major criterion for measuring wealth.<sup>43</sup> And as the tradition and custom required in the North, these wives helped their husbands in farming activities and in other economic activities to support the family. Aliu's mother, according to Alhaji Ziblilla, was a very hardworking woman. While helping her husband, she was also into entrepreneurship.<sup>44</sup>

According to Alhaji Abdul Rahman, Aliu Mahama's elder brother and an octogenarian Zongo chief, Aliu Mahama developed various ailments during his early childhood resulting from severe poverty and malnutrition in the family caused by the 1946 famine. As a result, Aliu had a stunted growth. Like any other community in the Northern Territories, Yendi in the 1940s was a deprived village. Certainly, life in Yendi was virtually as it had been in pre-colonial days. There was no piped water. Health and educational facilities were hopelessly inadequate.<sup>45</sup>

As a result of his health condition, Aliu was entrusted into the care of his maternal uncle, Alhaji Asumah at the age of five, even though his parents were still alive.<sup>46</sup> Suffice it to add that entrusting a child into the care of a family member formed part of the traditional custom of the Dagomba and other ethnic groups in Northern Ghana. The significance of this was to ensure unity and oneness among families. The extended family system was therefore cherished among the family of Aliu. Characteristically, food consumption and communal farming were highly encouraged. In the house of Alhaji Asumah, the compound was always full of people who came from different places to learn the Qur'an. Others went there for spiritual consultations. The family believed and practiced the Islamic religion and invariably

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<sup>43</sup> A person was considered wealthy based on the number of wives and survived children rather than money. It was a pride among the Dagombas and other ethnic groups in the Northern Territories within this period to have a large family.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Alhaji Ziblilla, Aliu Mahama's younger brother, Tamale, 13 January 2018.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

<sup>46</sup> Alhaji Asumah was an Islamic cleric known for his vast knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence in Yendi and its environs capable of healing the sick using the Quran.

cherished the strict values and principles of Islam such as discipline, honesty and trustworthiness. In fact, one unique feature which seemed evident in Aliu's life from childhood was discipline which he inherited from his childhood experiences.<sup>47</sup>

At the age of six, his health condition had improved. He had also developed an interest in studying the Qur'an. It was these signs that influenced Alhaji Asumah to enroll Aliu Mahama into Islamic learning known as Makaranta.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps, his love and respect for Islamic values and principles took shape during his days in Alhaji Asumah's household.

## **2.1 Period of Islamic Studies**

Aliu seemed to have performed considerably well in his studies since he was always promoted to the next verse. In those days in Islamic learning, the chapters of the Qur'an were written out on wooden slates from which beginners learnt to read aloud. A learner, taught to read the text on a slate, was then required to read it aloud repeatedly during the study periods until the Mallam was satisfied that the student had gained mastery in reading it correctly and, for some of them, the ability to recite it from memory.<sup>49</sup> Once the learner had accomplished these, he or she was promoted to the next verse, invariably, longer chapters.<sup>50</sup> Aliu could easily comprehend and commit to memory chapters of the Qur'an. His intellectual prowess earned him much love from his Mallam and peers. According to Alhaji Zibllila, Aliu was loved also because of his composed demeanor and discipline.<sup>51</sup>

Aside from his Islamic studies, Aliu also assisted with basic family maintenance. Because the chief occupation of the people in Yendi was farming and animal husbandry, children were fully engaged in useful works in all homes. There was the

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Mallam literally means a teacher.

<sup>50</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, interview.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

division of labour in all the homes as well. Aliu looked after the goats and sheep. In the farms, he helped to drive away birds that destroyed crops and looked after the fowls and fed young chicken with white ants.<sup>52</sup>

Because of Aliu's intellectual abilities in his Islamic studies, his parents were persuaded by a fairly enlightened relative known as Mr. Osman, who was the headteacher at the Yendi Primary school to enroll Aliu in school. Osman believed that by enrolling Aliu in school, he could be equipped to read and write letters for his father who was a chief. Aliu's parents were satisfied with this advice. However, Alhaji Asumah was unhappy with the decision because he feared that Aliu would convert to Christianity.<sup>53</sup> Many parents in Muslim communities had a strong belief that public secular schools had Christian orientation because of their origins and that their programmes were geared towards providing Christian education exclusively. They were not prepared for that kind of education for their children and rather opted for Islamic studies.<sup>54</sup>

The desire to enroll Aliu in school may have been informed by the government's efforts to encourage the education of the youth during the 1950s. Indeed, following the first general elections held in February 1951, which saw the election of Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP to form the first all-African government, there was a conscious effort to expand educational infrastructure and to encourage the education of the youth. As Kojo Botsio, the first African Minister of Education put it, 'Education is the keystone of a people's life and happiness.'<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid*

<sup>53</sup> Alhaji Rahama, interview.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*

<sup>55</sup> McWilliam, H. O. A, and Kwamena-Poh, M.A, *The Development of Education in Ghana* (London: Longman, 1975), 83

Taking advantage of the huge reserves accumulated during and after World War II, Nkrumah and his CPP Government took bold, highly imaginative and practical steps to push the development of the country on all fronts. Hence, in place of the colonial Ten-Year Development Plan drawn up in 1946 involving the expenditure of only £11.5 million, the CPP Government produced a Five-year Development Plan together with an accelerated plan for education which was to cost £74 million.<sup>56</sup>

Dr. Nkrumah's Accelerated Development Plan in 1951 focused on the expansion of educational access and development among other programmes, especially the free compulsory primary education for children between the ages of six and twelve was introduced.<sup>57</sup> Primary schools were therefore established in many areas throughout the country. That, in turn, led to a boom in the enrolment for primary education in many parts of the country. The number of registered pupils in the elementary schools increased from 212, 000 in December 1950, to 270, 000 by January 1952.<sup>58</sup>

It was this general campaign and the expanded education infrastructure and the prospects it offered that strengthened Mr. Osman's resolve on the need to send Aliu to school. He assured Alhaji Asumah that Aliu was never going to be converted to Christianity. To persuade him further, Aliu was replaced with his younger brother Mahama Zibllila. Thus, at the age of six, Aliu's Islamic religious study was abandoned and he was returned to his parents to begin formal education in a secular public school.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Albert Abu Boahen, *Ghana, Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Essex: Longman, 1975), 173

<sup>57</sup> McWilliam, *The Development*, 83

<sup>58</sup> Boahen, *Ghana*, 177-178.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*

## 2.2 Aliu at Yendi Primary Education

In 1952, at the age of six, Aliu was enrolled in the Yendi Primary School. He was the first son of his parents to be sent to school. His elder brothers and sisters had been denied access because they were recruited into the agricultural farms to produce food for the relatively large and polygamous family.<sup>60</sup> Coupled with this were the Islamic factor and the fact that schooling during the colonial era was perceived as a punishment on the grounds that schools were like military institutions as they also applied strict rules and regulations.<sup>61</sup>

The Yendi primary school was first opened as a Trade School in the Northern Territories in 1922 together with others in the south, namely, Mampong-Ashanti, Asuantsi, and Kibi purposely to train ex-Standard III boys in trade, carpentry, bricklaying, and road-making as well as food farming and the care of cash crops such as cocoa and palm oil.<sup>62</sup> In 1932, the school was moved to Tamale as a result of the reorganization of Trade Schools. Later in 1933, it was re-opened as a primary school.<sup>63</sup> At Yendi, however, the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories called this “the biggest thing done in all the twenty years I have been out”, because it was at least beginning education at the right end.<sup>64</sup>

Generally, the pace of formal education was slow to spread in the Northern Territories. Since 1901 the Northern Territories had been legally as well as territorially attached to the Gold Coast, their trade had been directed towards the sea

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<sup>60</sup> *ibid*

<sup>61</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion of this see R. B. Bening, ‘Development of Education in Northern Ghana, 1908-1957,’ *Ghana Social Science Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1972. See also Ibrahim Babangida Ibrahim, *The Life and Times of a Patriot: A biography of Chief Simon Diedong Dombo*, MA Dissertation, University of Ghana, Legon 2014, p.20

<sup>62</sup> PRAAD/M.P/3962, Memorandum by Guggisberg, 18 February 1921.

<sup>63</sup> C.K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1971), 164

<sup>64</sup> Kimble, *A Political History*, 177



rather than the desert. They had been governed at least on paper from Accra and they became subject to a similar pattern of British influence. Yet, the northern people remained physically and psychologically remote; they were in the Gold Coast and yet not part of it.<sup>65</sup>

The development policy framework designed for the area was not geared towards promoting real growth and development. The colonial educational policy was informed by the need to overcome communication barriers and to ensure that they maintain an effective presence in the area.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the administration wanted to give the impression that they believed Islamic education was best suited for the North (obviously trying to pattern their system on Lugard's Northern Nigeria).<sup>67</sup> However, it is clear that they wanted to avoid producing an articulate class of intellectuals as they had done in the Colony and Ashanti, who could challenge the government on many issues.

Maintaining a continued stream of labour from the Northern Territories to work in the plantations and the mining sector in the south was crucial in ensuring effective exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast. The colonial government thought that providing adequate education to many people in the Northern Territories would have stifled the flow of labour to the south to help extract raw materials bound for industries in Europe.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, as late as 1949, pupils in the protectorate of the Northern Territories could attend the only well-established Government Middle Boys' School in Tamale. Again, by the end of 1949, there were only eleven primary schools in the whole of the protectorate, located in Wa, Lawra, Chana, Zuarongo, Gambaga, Sandema, Yendi,

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid*

<sup>66</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 24 August 2002, p.9

<sup>67</sup> PRAAD, letter of 31 July 1922, from Acting District Commissioner, Wa, to Commissioner, Northern Province; 1953, No. 1406, Case No. 4/1922.

<sup>68</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 24 August 2002, p.9

Yeji, Krachi, Bawku and Salaga.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, Southern Ghana had had secondary education for almost three quarters of a century available and accessible to only southerners and countless primary and middle schools to support it.<sup>70</sup>

Many in the North were denied education opportunities to the extent that on the day of self-government only one Northerner (Alhassan Gbanzaba) had a university degree.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps too, great emphasis was placed on the importance of increasing the primary schools. Despite the best of intentions, no alien power is ever completely successful in building education systems for its dependencies. It could be argued that unlike many other educated elites in Northern Ghana such as S.D. Dombo, Mumuni Bawumia, Abayifar Karbo, J.A Braimah, S.K Owulonaa, Yakubu Tali, Hilla Limann to mention just a few who owed their education to the colonial government policy of educating children from the royal families in Northern Ghana, Aliu Mahama owed his education to the hard work of his brother, Mr. Osman.

Two colorful events welcomed Aliu's entrance into the Yendi Primary school. In 1952, every schoolboy or girl was given Queen Elizabeth II's coronation cup to mark the Queen's coronation in 1952. Aliu had jealously guarded it and used the cup every morning for his mother's porridge until his mother broke it to his great displeasure. The leader of Government Business, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, also visited Yendi and its environs. He visited the Yendi Primary school and Yendi Middle school. During this visit, Nkrumah encouraged the pupils to take advantage of the free compulsory education to study hard.<sup>72</sup>

In school, Aliu Mahama proved very intelligent, sociable and obedient. He always topped his class in almost all the subjects. One subject that he developed a greater

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<sup>69</sup> PRAAD/ARG3/1/129, Annual Report on Education in the Northern Territories 1949-1950, p. 2

<sup>70</sup> Mfantshipim secondary school in Cape Coast in southern Ghana was established in 1876

<sup>71</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 11 April 1957, p. 5

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Issah Amadu, a retired educationist, Aliu's primary school mate, Tamale, 9 January 2018

interest and invariably maintained his first position throughout his primary school days was arithmetic. Among some of the best friends Aliu met at Yendi Primary School were Adam Zakaria, now a retired medical doctor and Issah Amadu, a retired educationist. His brother and headteacher, Mr. Osman became the most influential teacher for young pupils like Aliu.<sup>73</sup>

In class six, Aliu expressed his desire to be the senior prefect of the school. He was disqualified because of his stature, even though he merited it intellectually. It is interesting to state that usually in Northern schools, the bigger boys were made prefects, and not the brightest. The belief was that the senior school prefect was to act in the absence of teachers and therefore, was expected to appear intimidating among his peers in order to enforce rules and regulations in the school.<sup>74</sup>

Aliu was a keen sports enthusiast and played for the school football team. However, his talent in football ended even before he completed primary school. One key reason that ended his football dream was that he burnt his only school uniform in an attempt to dry it with fire after using it as a football jersey. Not only was he given a heavy knock by his mother, but he was never bought a new uniform throughout the academic year. According to Alhaji Zibllila, Aliu's friends mocked him anytime he wore his burnt uniform to school. It is important to state that, even though Aliu stopped playing football, he continued to develop robust affection and support for football.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, interview.



### **Young Aliu Mahama playing football in his school uniform**

In 1957, Aliu intensified his learning as he was preparing for an interview for selection to go to Middle School. It was also the year of Ghana's independence. As part of the independence celebrations, competitions of various kinds were organized nationwide. At Yendi Primary School, pupils were asked to write an essay titled "How I Will Spend My Independence Day." According to Issah Amadu, all the final year students were encouraged to participate since no one knew the type of questions their interview for selection to the Middle School would be based on. The prize was won by one Abdulai Mohammed. However, the rest of the pupils including Aliu received praise from their teachers, at least, for putting up a challenge.<sup>76</sup>

### **2.3 Aliu at Yendi Middle School**

From Yendi Primary School, Aliu Mahama proceeded to Yendi Government Middle School in 1958 after passing his reading test and interview. The examination was very competitive and promotion was strictly based on merit because there were few Middle

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<sup>76</sup> Amadu, interview.

schools in the region. The Yendi Government Middle School was opened in 1951 together with those in Nalerigu, Damongo and Wa. These schools were to play important roles that the Tamale Government Middle School was playing.<sup>77</sup> Although it was built by the government, the school came under the authority of Dagbon District Council, so it was called Dagbon District Council Middle School, in short, D. D. C. Middle School. The motto of the school was *Tuma Ka Vi* (There is no shame in work).

At Yendi Middle school, Aliu continued to dominate his class in many areas and showed discipline in the conduct of his academic pursuits and he immediately caught the attention of his teachers. The Yendi Middle school was both a boarding and a day school. Aliu however, opted to be a day student because of finance and the fact that he wanted to support his parents in other domestic works at home. Perhaps too, Aliu feared the stern punishment that was routinely meted out to pupils in the boarding house who violated school regulations. Ibrahim Mahama, in his autobiography, confirmed that "the serious offenses at the Yendi Middle school included a boarding student going to town without permission, insulting a prefect... A student found guilty of these offences was laid on a large table face down. Four strong boys held the hands and legs of the offender, and a teacher administered a physical punishment by using a whip made of oleander... the victim could be given twelve to twenty-four lashes to his bareback in the presence of students and staff".<sup>78</sup>

Following the establishment of new primary and middle schools in the North, there was pressure on the single Government Secondary school in Tamale. The School, in 1958 could admit only 96 students drawn from the 18 Middle schools across the

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<sup>77</sup> Bening, R, B, *A History of Education in Northern Ghana 1907-1976* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1990)

<sup>78</sup> Ibrahim Mahama, *The Destiny of a Horse Boy* (Accra: Gillbt Publication, 2015),164

Northern Territories.<sup>79</sup> The situation ignited serious protests and debates between the government and the elites in the North. While the latter envisaged an increase in population by 1960, the former argued that new secondary schools were not necessary at that time and that the needs of the North for secondary education had been adequately provided for.<sup>80</sup>

It was in response to this demand that the sixth form at the secondary school was introduced in the Northern Territories to meet the increasing number of Middle schools. Funds were made available for the provision of a science laboratory at Tamale secondary school which was a necessary part of the sixth form development. The introduction of the sixth form created opportunities for secondary education in the North, which compared favorably with those in the south. In the Northern region, there was a place for approximately one boy in Middle Form II who was clearly not more than fourteen years old.<sup>81</sup>

However, the limited number of secondary schools in the region made the selection highly competitive. In that case, a common entrance examination was conducted and only a few were admitted. Out of her porridge money, Mariama supported her son to register for the exam in Middle form II.<sup>82</sup> Alhaji Aliu Mahama was among the few pupils who passed the entrance examination and gained admission to the sixth form at the Tamale Secondary school. So instead of four years in Middle school, Aliu wrote the common entrance when he had done two years.

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<sup>79</sup> Wa Middle-18, Tamale (Dagomba D.C.) -14, Lawra and Yendi- 10 each, Tumu, Issa and Prang- 5 each, Bawku, Salaga and Yeji-4 each, Tamale Girls', Awe and Sandema-3 each, Tamale United, Damongo and Zuarungu-2 each and Bolgatanga R. C. and Bolgatanga Girls'-1 each. These figures are drawn from the PRAAD/ARG3/3/47, Northern Teachers Bulletin, November 1957.

<sup>80</sup> PRAAD/ARG3/1/32, Minutes of a meeting of the Northern Region Board of Education held in Tamale on Monday 21 April 1958. P. 3

<sup>81</sup> Record of a meeting between the Minister of Education and members of Parliament from the North on Saturday, 1 June 1957 in the Prime Minister's conference room, Accra

<sup>82</sup> Areas of the examination were Mathematics, English (composition, grammar) and General paper (quantitative, attitude and verbal attitude), and students were supposed to have had 200 and over marks to qualify.

## 2.4 Aliu Mahama at Tamale Secondary School

In 1960, Aliu entered the Tamale Secondary School at the age of fourteen. The Government Secondary School in Tamale started as a Government Trade School in 1907. It became a Government Middle Boarding School in 1927 and later became a Secondary School in 1951 to provide secondary education for the entire Northern Territories.<sup>83</sup> It was this first secondary school for the Northern Territories that produced all known top-educated northerners in the Gold Coast.<sup>84</sup> Essentially, it was established to correct many of the wrongs which the official colonial policy had inflicted on the area; therefore, it was expected to embark on academic and co-curricular programmes and activities that were to promote, among others, the treasured values, cultures, traditions and economic ventures of the people of the area.<sup>85</sup>

Aliu's success in the common entrance came as excitement to his parents. They were even more excited about the idea of him going to secondary school. However, his parents could not raise money for his prospectus. His father was unwell. This left young Aliu in a dilemma. Was he to resign himself to the idea that going to secondary school after the Middle school was out of his future planning?<sup>86</sup>

As a determined young man in search of a future and a vision, he had realized that education was key to success and he, therefore, decided to pursue his studies with all seriousness. It was against this backdrop that Aliu applied for a holiday job at the Yendi District Council. He was recruited as a tax collector responsible for collecting

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<sup>83</sup> *Graham, The History of Education*, 178

<sup>84</sup> Those included S. D. Dombo (leader of the Muslim Association Party), Alhaji Yakubu Tali (a member of the Legislative Assembly, member of the National Assembly, High Commissioner to Nigeria and Tolon Na), Abayifa-Kar-bo (Minister of Labour), J. A. Braimah (Minister of Communication, Chief Executive for the Northern region and Yagbon Wura), Imoro Egala (Minister of Health and leader of the PNP), Alhassan Gbanzaba (the first Northern graduate), to mention but a few.

<sup>85</sup> Rahim, *Events in my Life*, 158

<sup>86</sup> Alhaji Ziblilla, interview.

market tolls. Among some of the communities he operated were Saboba, Sang, and sometimes Yendi Township. Through this job, Aliu mobilized funds to pay for his prospectus. His mother had provided him little money for his upkeep at school.<sup>87</sup> It could be argued that Aliu became independent and resourceful very early in his life. Undaunted by the lack of family support, he was very much determined to continue his education even though most of his colleagues were satisfied with their Middle School certificates and never proceeded to secondary school.

Aliu benefited from the Northern scholarship. He entered the Tamale Secondary school at the time the North had been granted a scholarship package popularly referred to as the “Northern Scholarship” and he was one of the early beneficiaries. The scholarship scheme was implemented immediately after independence in 1957 as a result of the continued discontent of the educated northern leaders to bridge the gap in development, particularly, in education between Southern and Northern Ghana. Their worry was that while the representatives from the North involved in political, administrative and other national affairs and developments were mainly Standard seven leavers and Trained Teachers with Certificate ‘A’ or ‘B’, their counterparts in the South were doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants and other top-level University-trained professionals and graduates.<sup>88</sup>

As a result, while the pace for achieving independence was quickening, there was growing apprehension among the educated Northern leaders who perceived that given the wide gap in the educational attainment between the North and the South, Northerners would be politically disadvantaged after independence.<sup>89</sup> Some of them,

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid*

<sup>88</sup> PRAAD/ARG3/1/438, Meeting of Minister with Members of Parliament from North, 1957

<sup>89</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 11 April 1957, p. 5



therefore, started to demand the postponement of the granting of independence to the Protectorate of the Northern Territories.

The first of this protest came from J. H. Alhassan, Member of Parliament for Dagomba West in 1949 when the People's Representative Assembly was asking for self-government. He noted that:

... I wish to call upon this Council to dissociate itself from the resolution passed by this body ... Full self-government as stated in the resolution based and conducted on sound democratic procedure is what both Africans and Europeans alike are hoping for this country. In fact, it will be foolish of British to console herself with the idea that the people of the Gold Coast shall ever remain a subject race but to go to the extent of demanding 'immediate grant and sanction of full self-government for the chiefs and people of the Gold Coast'... and in which case we are included, I shall put a big question mark against...<sup>90</sup>

Northerners' animosity toward the government and against the demand for self-government was made clearer in a motion tabled by J. A. Braimah, the first Member of Parliament for Gonja West. He stated that:

... It is our fervent wish that we hang together, but if others will not be a bit patient we shall have to hang separately. Although the Protectorate is devoid of major industrial enterprises and the geological conformation ... has given no evidence of any mineral resources in economic qualities which makes it economically poor, we will choose to stay apart rather than allow ourselves to be rushed speedily to immediate self-government ... we are indeed very sorry that we are delaying the progress of our brothers in their

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<sup>90</sup> Minutes of the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the Northern Territorial Council (NTC) 4<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> January 1950, p. 40.

march towards their goal ... I want them to understand that we are only forced by circumstances to take such delaying action. It is unfortunate for the country as a whole that some of the unreasonable southerners have been forced to come and work for us, in this unpopular area. They have shown us what they are and what they will do as masters. If there is anyone to blame for our fears, they are the people to blame.<sup>91</sup>

Despite all these criticisms and protests by 1951, the Northern people were convinced that their attempts to delay the granting of self-government had failed because negotiations were hardly progressing. If there was going to be a possibility of closing the gap between the North and the South, then the best thing to do was to ask for special concessions from the colonial Government in the period of the diarchy. The general impression was that the British Colonial Administration accepted responsibility for the retarded education in the North and therefore, proposed a grant of thirty million pounds sterling to be administered by the British Government for accelerated educational development in the North. However, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah did not accept that proposal on grounds that it could pose a big security threat for the British Government without the involvement of the Ghana Government. He then gave an undertaking to implement a special scholarship scheme which would ensure accelerated education for the North to catch up with the South. The North accepted the proposal.<sup>92</sup>

Studying under scholarship, life was generally interesting and pleasant. There was no need to think about paying school fees. Food was provided for free. For the first time,

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<sup>91</sup> Minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the N. T. C., 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January 1954, p. 45.

<sup>92</sup> For comprehensive discussions on the Northern Scholarships scheme see the Minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the N. T. C., 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1953, p. 20, see also PRAAD/ARG3/1/438, Meeting of Minister with Members of Parliament from North, 1 June 1957, p. 1-10, Alhaji Rahim Gbadamosi, *Events in my life*, 2016, p. 154 and also Saaka A, "Evolution," 74

Aliu took advantage of the scholarship to stay in the boarding house. His life was transformed in the boarding house. He was taught how to use cutlery to eat. Again, he learned how to wear the necktie to match a pair of shoes with a pair of long white trousers which was the required mode of dressing for evening dining. According to Alhaji Zimbilla, when Aliu came home on his first holiday, there were significant changes in him. He had grown taller and become exceedingly neat. "He appeared so neat that some of us became interested in going to school".<sup>93</sup>

In Tamale secondary school, ambition, discipline and hard work continued to aid Aliu's good performance in class. He took advantage of the pleasant environment to intensify his studies. Students were dismissed for unsatisfactory performance. Aliu intensified his studies even though the possibility of him being dismissed for unsatisfactory academic performance was most unlikely.<sup>94</sup> What perhaps might have posed a challenge in Aliu's education in the senior high school was money for other side perks. He had decided to continue his tax collection role during holidays to gather money for the next term but at the same time, he was required to help his parents on the farm. What was noted was that Aliu would collect his taxes during market days, help his parents during the rest of the days and study at night. He succeeded in mobilizing money out of these busy schedules to return to school on time.<sup>95</sup>

Aliu Mahama's intellectual excellence continued to prevail and he passed all his examinations. He chose to study science in form four. Students who studied science were regarded as brilliant because science was perceived to be a course for only the brightest. Among those who came from Yendi Middle School, only Aliu was in the

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<sup>93</sup> Alhaji Ziblilla, interview.

<sup>94</sup> According to Issah Amadu, Aliu Mahama was one of the best students in the class.

<sup>95</sup> Alhaji Ziblilla, interview.

science class and was the only one in Tamakole House. This made his new environment complete. In Tamakole House, Aliu became close friends with Alhassan Abdul-Rahama, Attah Natogma, Abubakari Sumani among others.<sup>96</sup>

In 1966, Aliu became a member of the Northern Students Union (NSU). The Northern Student Union was formed in 1965 by Northern students in the three Universities in Ghana. Its objectives were to encourage students to pursue higher education, bridge the literacy gap between the south and the North by educating parents on the need to send their wards to school and to serve as a platform to advocate developmental projects for the region, particularly educational facilities. The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi was chosen as the headquarters of the Union. Branches were opened in the various secondary schools in the North.<sup>97</sup>

According to Abdul Rahama, the Union gathered students during long vacation for classes. This was done either at the Tamale Senior High School or at the Bolgatanga Women's Training College. One person who inspired them much, according to Abdul Rahama was Ibrahim Mahama, a B.A General Art student from the University of Ghana who was also an alumnus of both Yendi Middle and Tamale Secondary School. He told them about the initial monetary benefits of a University graduate and the secondary school graduate. He made a comprehensive analysis of the fringe benefits granted to the graduate soon after graduation. What struck them most was that he made it clear that a secondary school pupil who did not continue to the University has thrown away sixty percent of the benefits of his education. These benefits awaiting University students appeared to have encouraged most secondary school students in the North to pursue University education.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Alhassan Rahama a retired educationist and a classmate of Aliu Mahama, Accra, 16 January 2018

<sup>97</sup> Mahama, *The Destiny*, 84

<sup>98</sup> *ibid*

Consequently, between 1960 and 1967, when Aliu successfully obtained his Ordinary and Advanced Level Certificates, his desire to pursue his education beyond the Secondary level and to become an engineer had been motivated. In 1967, he sat for the university entrance exam in Kumasi and passed. His dream of becoming an engineer had been set on course.<sup>99</sup>

## **2.5 Aliu Mahama at the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi**

In 1967, Aliu was enrolled at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, to pursue a BSc. Building Technology. The University was established in 1952, first as the Kumasi College of Technology and later the name was changed to University of Science and Technology before finally, acquiring its present name. Its purpose was to train and provide courses in technology and vocational training for Ghanaian engineers.<sup>100</sup>

By the time Aliu entered the university in 1967, he had not traveled to any part of Southern Ghana. In fact, he had not traveled beyond Salaga. Government transport was the most reliable public transport to Kumasi. However, many students from the North had by that time gained admission to the University in Kumasi and had developed a system of organizing buses to Kumasi and back to the North. So, it was easy for Aliu to join.<sup>101</sup>

Life at the university in Kumasi was not as favorable as it had been at Tamale for Aliu and his Northern colleagues. As stated earlier, the North after independence had been granted a scholarship package which was to cover both secondary and university education in Ghana and outside Ghana.<sup>102</sup> However, in 1966, when the National Liberation Council overthrew Kwame Nkrumah, steps were taken to suspend all the

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<sup>99</sup> Alhaji Ziblilla, interview.

<sup>100</sup> McWilliam, *The Development of Education*, 80

<sup>101</sup> Alhaji Ziblilla, Interview.

<sup>102</sup> Rahama, Interview.

government of Ghana scholarships, including the Northern Scholarship. Many students, including Aliu, faced terrible hardships as a result of the withdrawal of their scholarships.<sup>103</sup>

As the situation worsened, the Northern Students Union for which Aliu by his place of origin became an automatic member convened a meeting at their headquarters in Kumasi and protested against the NLC government. A letter that contained criticism and derogatory remarks against the NLC was presented to the office of the military government. In response, the NLC government described the Northern Students Union as “young pioneers” who thought that Nkrumah did no wrong and then suggested that all the Union members, particularly those in Kumasi should be arrested.<sup>104</sup> According to Mohammed Andani, he together with Aliu and several others left the University campus at night to seek refuge with a security man, who fortunately was a Wala man from Wa in the Northern part of Ghana. Later, the NLC government was advised that the prosecution of the students would trigger ethnic resentment and sympathy for their cause. Peace was restored.<sup>105</sup>

Through his ingenuity, hard work and determination, Aliu Mahama almost self-financed his University education. His savings from his tax collector's business came in handy. Though Aliu might have been a serious and focused young man, there were other love interests. Indeed, it was during his study at the university that he made a runaway marriage with a young lady by the name Asana. According to Alhaji Zibllila, the two met in 1967 at Tamale at the time Aliu was pursuing his secondary education. They secretly stayed in a relationship and finally had a child two years into the relationship even though they were not married. It was from Asana that Aliu Mahama

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<sup>103</sup> Mahama, *The Destiny*, 84

<sup>104</sup> *ibid*

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Mohammed Andani, Accra, 10 October 2018

had his first child, Aliu Mohammed.<sup>106</sup> However, due to Aliu's busy schedules as a student, the woman ran out of patience and broke up with him.<sup>107</sup> Perhaps, the nature of the engineering course and the system of education in Ghana which emphasized the individual and competitive achievement had stimulated some vigorous strains of ambition and so he had to pursue his education in a very single-minded manner at the expense of his family.

It was also around this time that Aliu lost his father. As a royal and firstborn of his mother, Dagbon custom and tradition demanded his presence during his father's burial.<sup>108</sup> However, the nature of the engineering course and the distance between Kumasi and Yendi prevented Aliu from paying his last respect to his father. According to Andani, this affected Aliu's studies throughout the semester.<sup>109</sup> These challenges, coupled with his financial constraints seemed to have spurred him on his academic efforts and he achieved considerable success. In 1971, he successfully graduated with BSc. (Building Technology) Honours degree from the said university. In 1972, he was recruited as an engineer at the State Construction Corporation at Bolgatanga.<sup>110</sup>

## **2.6 Aliu as an Engineer**

In 1972, Aliu started his professional career as an engineer at the State Construction Corporation at Bolgatanga. The State Construction Corporation was established in

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<sup>106</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, Interview.

<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately, Madam Asana is death and the family has also refused to discuss this issue with me. The narratives presented, therefore, are the views of Alhaji Aliu Mahama's family members. So, therefore, there may be bias in the information presented. However, it gives us some understanding of the circumstances leading to the breakdown of Aliu's first marriage.

<sup>108</sup> Dagbon custom and tradition demands that all first male sons of every woman represent his siblings during the burial process. Usually, these people are given the chance to see where and how their father is laid to rest and pay him their last respect.

<sup>109</sup> Andani, interview.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid*

1962 by the CPP government as part of its industrialization policy.<sup>111</sup> It was Aliu's desire to stay in Yendi or closer so that he could pay regular visit to his widowed mother. Whatever the motive was, he did not get the chance to serve his native town and eventually accepted the posting and went to Bolgatanga.<sup>112</sup> His wish to serve his people was short-lived when after three years (1972-1975), he was transferred from Bolgatanga to Koforidua in the Eastern region to assume the role of Assistant Regional Manager of the State Construction Corporation.

Interestingly, it was during his working years at Bolgatanga that he married a lady by name of Rahamatu. She was an educationist in Tamale and the daughter of Imoro Egala, a minister for Trade and Industry and the first black chairman of Ghana Cocoaobod in the First Republic and a long-standing political stalwart in Ghana through to the Third Republic. The couple had three sons, Umar Farouk Aliu Mahama, Fayad Aliu Mahama and Halim Aliu Mahama and one daughter – Salma Aliu Mahama. All these children received a good education and are currently working in various institutions in Ghana.<sup>113</sup> From all accounts, Rahamatu provided a domestic environment that enabled Aliu to pursue his career as an engineer. According to Aliu's close associates and family, Rahamatu was 'an ideal woman.'<sup>114</sup> Sources revealed that she provided her husband with moral support and in most cases joined Aliu's campaign team in all the elections he contested after their marriage.<sup>115</sup>

By accepting to serve in all these places, Aliu Mahama was able to learn and acquaint himself with the social, economic, political and cultural institutions of these places. Besides, he had the opportunity to learn some of the languages that he hardly

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<sup>111</sup> D. E. K, Amenumey, Ghana: *A Concise History from Pre-Colonial Times to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Accra: Woeli Publication, 2011), 221

<sup>112</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, Interview.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Alhassan Zibllila 46 year's old teacher, Tamale, 11 December 2017

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Kuliya a watchman of Aliu's residence Cantonment Accra on the 16 December 2017



understood. For example, he learned Wala in Bolgatanga and a bit of the Akan dialect in Koforidua. In effect, it must be pointed out that Aliu Mahama was exposed to a variety of influences at this stage in his life which undoubtedly helped to shape his future life.<sup>116</sup>

Aliu's desire to work in Tamale finally materialized in 1976. He had had a dramatic promotion from Assistant Regional Manager at Koforidua to a Regional Manager in charge of the Northern Region. He accepted his posting and returned to Tamale to start his work as a Regional Manager. Thus, within four years in the engineering profession, he rose rapidly through the ranks in his career.<sup>117</sup> As a regional manager, he had supervisory and administrative authority over all the employees of the State Housing Corporation. The sectional heads, at regular intervals, reported the performance of their respective departments to him. At the time, the State Construction Corporation spearheaded all construction activities in the country. As such, they diligently performed their duties to the admiration of all. In order to contribute to the development of the nation, Aliu deemed it expedient to create a strong rapport between himself and his subordinates. As an engineer, he was regarded as one of the best in the construction industry due to the immense knowledge he had in that field. Indeed, he was a beacon of hope in the construction industry.<sup>118</sup>

While serving as the Regional Manager, Aliu was also interested in sharpening and deepening his managerial and leadership skills. In 1978, Aliu got admission to the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) Accra. As a public servant, he had to combine studies with work in order to earn income to pay his

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<sup>116</sup> Alhassan, Interview.

<sup>117</sup> Abdul Rahama, Interview.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Daari Wahab, a retired engineer who worked with Aliu at the State House Corporation, Tamale, 12 December 2017

fees and to support his family at home. In 1980, he successfully obtained two certificates in Project Planning and Management and in Leadership from GIMPA.<sup>119</sup>

The preceding accounts of Aliu Mahama's life indicates that he had an uninterrupted education from basic to the tertiary levels despite the challenges that greeted the North at the time. These academic achievements were made possible due to his sterling qualities of hard work, discipline, dedication and determination. It was these qualities and qualifications that helped Aliu to contribute to the development of Ghana. The next chapter examines his life within the contexts of his work as a private entrepreneur.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid

## CHAPTER THREE

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN GHANA 1980s-2000

#### Introduction

This chapter examines Aliu's entrepreneurial life within the socio-economic context of the two decades, from 1980 to 2000. The chapter begins by looking at Government-Business relations under the Rawlings era from the quasi-military regime to 2000. This discussion is a necessary background to foreground a discussion of Aliu's business exploit. Again, the chapter discusses Aliu Mahama's businesses and the role he played in reviving an ailing construction industry in Ghana. Why did he choose private business over employment in the public service? What expertise did he have, and what business did he set up? Particular attention is given to how the private sector policies of successive governments affected private entrepreneurship generally in Ghana including Aliu's businesses.

#### 3.1 The Political Economy of Government-Business Relation

In Ghana, government-business collaboration has tended to be dependent on the political ideologies of the reigning political regime. It is often akin to a patron-client relationship. Rawlings and his Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) after taking power in the 1990s, adopted a socialist approach as a way of reviving the crippled economy of the country. The economy was in ruins, characterized by hyperinflation, shortages of foreign exchange, and declining investment and savings. The private sector had been identified to be deeply involved in corruption. It was generally felt that the activities of corrupt and self-seeking businessmen were largely to be blamed for the hardships that the country experienced in the 1970s.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Tony Killick, *Development Economics in Action; A Study of Economic Policies in Ghana* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010), 457

Under the PNDC, the private sector was initially excluded from major policy and decision-making processes. The state did not engage in dialogue and discussion with long-standing business organizations such as the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) and the Ghana National Chamber of Commerce (GNCC), which had been formed under earlier military regimes, thereby weakening their advocacy functions. This was because the ruling government believed that these institutions themselves may have been part of the culture of corruption in the country.<sup>121</sup>

In the light of this, the PNDC regime rather went after prominent businessmen such as Appiah Menka, B. A. Mensah, Kwame Safo-Adu. It was all part of the PNDC revolutionary fervor and the rhetoric of bringing rapacious petty-bourgeoisie to heel. The crackdown was further extended to include political critics like Haruna Atta, Kwasi Pratt, Ato Sam, Kofi Coomson.<sup>122</sup> Inevitable criticisms targeted not only businesses that were confiscated or closed down arbitrarily, but also the willful disregard of due process of the law in addressing economic crimes.<sup>123</sup>

The government also attempted an independent self-reliant stabilization program, which involved the confiscation of all fifty-cedi notes and their conversion into forced loans to the state, redeemable after five to ten years, and a freeze on balances over 50,000 cedis. The brutality and ruthlessness of these measures by the Rawlings government had a chilling effect on the development of the entrepreneurial mindset of individuals and professional bodies in the country.<sup>124</sup> The general strategy of people

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<sup>121</sup> Ho-Won Jeong, "Liberal Economic Reform in Ghana: A Contested Political Agenda," *Africa Today* 42, no. 4 (1995): 87

<sup>122</sup> Menka, *The River*, 189

<sup>123</sup> Roger Tangri, "The Politics of Government-Business Relations in Ghana," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 1 (1992): 5

<sup>124</sup> Eboe Hutchful, *Ghana's Adjustment Experience: The Paradox of Reform* (Accra: UNRISD, 2002), 100

engaged in business around this period was therefore to maintain a low profile for fear of being investigated, prosecuted, or have their businesses confiscated.<sup>125</sup>

As the private sector was stifled, the economy began to plummet. Per capita income declined by 30 percent, real export earnings dropped by 52 percent and between 1974 and 1983, GDP fell by a fifth.<sup>126</sup> There was drought in 1983 which brought severe food shortages and pushed inflation to 122%. Poor rain contributed to low water levels in the Volta Lake forcing a reduction in the production and supply of electricity and consequently reducing manufacturing capacity.<sup>127</sup> Bush fires swept the countryside destroying many cocoa farms. Men and livestock were dying in thousands; food crops and cocoa farms as well as virgin forests were burned to ashes.<sup>128</sup> At the same time, Nigeria expelled over one million Ghanaians illegally resident in that country, exacerbating the unemployment and food situation. The economic situation was running critically and the country needed assistance.

Meanwhile, the government remained reluctant to consult businessmen. By 1984, the PNDC realized that the economy of the nation was in dire straits. Rawlings could not secure financial support from the Eastern bloc which was showing signs of structural collapse. Ghana turned to the Breton Woods Institute of Washington. The only viable and available option left for the nation to revive the economy was the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-proposed Economic Recovery Programme (ERP). The government embraced it albeit some concerns raised by some of the PNDC members.<sup>129</sup> The Economic Recovery Program (ERP) was far-reaching in 1983, including market-based reforms intended to enhance the development of the private

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<sup>125</sup> Jeong, "Liberal Economic Reform in Ghana," 87

<sup>126</sup> Darko K. Opoku, "Political Dilemmas of Indigenous Capitalist Development in Africa: Ghana under the Provisional National Defence Council," *Africa Today* 55. no. 2, 33

<sup>127</sup> Danso-Boafo, *J.J. Rawlings*, 144

<sup>128</sup> Menka, *The River*, 189

<sup>129</sup> *ibid*

sector, as well as to promote foreign investment, and thereby contributed to the achievement of the Government's economic goals.<sup>130</sup>

However, the role of the private sector was not visible as state-owned enterprises remained a prominent feature in the life of the nation. This was because only limited divestiture had taken place, and the government continued to make significant interventions in the economy.<sup>131</sup> Rawlings repeatedly called those engaged in business ‘crooks’ and ‘thieves.’<sup>132</sup> On the other hand, the relationship between the government and the public sector was not entirely smooth. Among other public sector workers, engineers were continuously harassed. For example, Sam Okudzeto who was an engineer and at the same time President of the Association of Recognized Professional Bodies (ARPB) was arrested, charged and detained for one and half years. Fearing for his life, Vice President of the ARPB, J. N. A. Attoh also an engineer fled Ghana and never returned.<sup>133</sup> Low salaries had also led to mass resignations among the engineering faculty at the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. As engineers sought jobs in Europe and the United States, Ghana experienced a ‘brain drain.’<sup>134</sup>

The situation worsened to the extent that the engineering profession became less attractive. As McGough noted, Butler who was the President of the Ghana Institute of Engineering had to extend his Presidency a few months because ‘not many people were keen on becoming leaders of the Association again.’<sup>135</sup> It could be argued that, while the PNDC government may seem to be anti-business in the face of Ghanaians,

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<sup>130</sup> Tangri, “The Politics of Government-Business,” 2

<sup>131</sup> *ibid*

<sup>132</sup> K. Opoku, “Political Dilemmas,” 11

<sup>133</sup> Laura McGough J, “Civil Society in Post-Colonial Ghana: A Case Study of the Ghana Institute of Engineers”, *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana*, no. 3 (1999): 18

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 18

much of the effort to create an attractive public sector environment had been surface-scratching and a lot were needed to be done. It is curious that it was during this time that Alhaji Aliu Mahama resigned his position in public sector as the Regional Manager in charge of Northern Region State Housing Corporation and moved into private entrepreneurship to establish himself as a road constructor in 1982.

It was revealed to me that two reasons informed Aliu's decision. First, Aliu wanted to be closer to his family in Tamale and in Yendi. According to Alhaji Abdul Rahaman, the State Housing Corporation offered Aliu a new position in Accra after distinguishing himself as a Regional Manager in charge of the Corporation.<sup>136</sup> With his poor family background, accepting this offer meant that he could be provided a free bungalow, a car with a driver, a monthly guaranteed salary and other side perks of comfort. But these offered no optimal attractions to induce Aliu to stay in the public sector. Having accepted his two initial postings to Bolgatanga and to Takoradi which took him far away from his family, Aliu decided this time to pay much attention to his family and rejected the offer.

The second reason was that Aliu found the private sector lucrative. As stated already, low salaries had led to mass resignations among the engineering faculty at the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi and at the same time forced engineers to seek jobs in Europe and the United States. According to Alhaji Zibllila, Aliu Mahama could not boast of a self-owned car and had complained of low salaries in spite of his position as a Regional Manager. Aliu's desire to establish himself in the private sector was strengthened by the influence of Mr. Amadu Dramani a worker at the Feeder Road Department of the State Corporation in Tamale and also a trained

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<sup>136</sup> I could not find any written document to confirm this and Alhaji Abdul Rahaman could not also remember the position Aliu was offered to serve in Accra but remembered that it was a high profile position.

engineer from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. Mr. Dramani had long wish to establish his private firm but failed due to financial constraints. As a result, when Aliu Mahama decided to resign from the public sector, he immediately received strong backing from Mr. Dramani. Thus, in spite of the PNDC anti-business outlook of unlawful arrest, confiscations and threats of private businesses and individuals, the two resigned from their positions and established a Limited Liability Company called LIDRA.<sup>137</sup> For Aliu, perhaps his entrepreneurship skill acquired from his mother had injected into him enough of the vaccines of private capitalism to withstand the attractions or threats from the regime.

### **3.2 Lidra and the Construction Industry in Ghana, 1980s -2000**

The name Lidra was coined out of the names of these two partners; Aliu and Dramani: LI from Aliu and DRA from Dramani-----LI+DRA=LIDRA.<sup>138</sup> The company was registered under the Companies Code, 1963 and granted legal operation certificate on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1982, classified under a financial class of 3-4 to undertake projects such as: roads and related minor structures and concrete bridges, culverts and other structures.<sup>139</sup> Aliu Mahama was appointed the Managing Director and Mr. Amadu Dramani as Director.<sup>140</sup>

Lidra's desire to create wealthy and to revive the ailing construction industry was initially curtailed by his inability to win competitive government contracts. This was partially due to lack of skilled personnel and lack of proper machinery and

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<sup>137</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, interview.

<sup>138</sup> Henceforth, Lidra will be used to mean Aliu.

<sup>139</sup> Certificate to Commence Business, Companies Code, 1963, issued by Assistant Registrar of companies, Accra, 15 November 1983

<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, both patterns (Aliu and Dramani) are all not alive so I could not find out how much each contributed to the establishment of the firm as well as the criterion for selection of leadership. But I was told during my interview with Mr. Abdulai who served as secretary of the firm since 1992, that Alhaji Aliu Mahama contributed much in that direction. Therefore, there may be bias in this information but at last it helps us to understand how the firm was established and how positions were distributed.



equipment.<sup>141</sup> The military government was also extremely distrustful of private contractors, not least, given the PNDC's populist outlook.<sup>142</sup> All major government contracts were awarded to foreign construction firms, primarily because of their better machinery and equipment, among other assets, leading to their repatriation of huge sums of money into their home accounts. Meanwhile, private indigenous Ghanaian construction companies were losing their bids for many of the contracts, and continuously suffered a major setback in their quest to effectively compete for such lucrative projects.<sup>143</sup> This attitude of the government affected the activities of Lidra, because government was the major construction client in Ghana and therefore had direct influence on construction in both public and private sectors through their policies and legislations.<sup>144</sup>

By 1984, the economic reforms seeds sown had started to yield fruits and government began to pursue social intervention programmes. It was estimated that foreign capital inflows to revive the economy amounted to \$1.07 billion between 1983 and 1985. Road and state structures such as school buildings, hospitals rehabilitation and irrigation projects were undertaken.<sup>145</sup> Under these initiatives, Lidra was awarded the construction of Norrip teacher's bungalow in the Northern Region in 1985. Though this was his first government contract, Lidra was impressive. It was reported that materials for this project were made up of high quality with nice architectural designs. The quality of this project drew the attention of government and other private individuals to begin to award Lidra contracts.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with Abdul Rahama, Managing Director of Lidra, Tamale, 18 January 2018.

<sup>142</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 20 August 1981, p. 3

<sup>143</sup> Peter, "Promoting a Local Entrepreneurial," 11

<sup>144</sup> Abdul Rahama, interview.

<sup>145</sup> Danso-Boafo, *J.J. Rawlings*, 155

<sup>146</sup> Abdul Rahama, interview.



**Aliu with his construction crew at the Nonrip project**



**Nonrip teacher's bungalow**

Under the ERP and its offspring, the Structural Adjustment Programme, cost recovery measures were imposed in the critical areas of health care, industrial sector and education. Over 181 unprofitable state owned enterprises were earmarked for divestment under a privatization scheme leading ultimately to the retrenchment of over 20, 000 people.<sup>147</sup> These measures brought hardships on Ghanaians whilst the international community heaped praises on the economy, it was near impossible to see the manifestation of the glaring economic statistics in the people's lives.<sup>148</sup>

Against the backdrop of the hardships engendered by the ERP, in 1987, issues relating to poverty were formally placed on the ERP agenda. A new Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Coast of Adjustment and Development (PAMSCAD) was introduced. PAMSCAD was initially directed at one thousand projects identified through local community initiatives. Local needs such as renovation of primary school buildings, construction of new health posts, pit latrines and dams were to be identified and addressed through the utilization of local labour, local technology and

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<sup>147</sup> Kelvin, Shillington, *Ghana and the Rawlings Factor* (London: Macmillan Press, 1992)177

<sup>148</sup> Danso-Boafo, *J.J. Rawlings*, 156

local materials. The policy was also to cater for the improvement of water and work schemes for households in the Northern regions.<sup>149</sup>

In the meantime, the government embarked on a nationwide selection of competent indigenous construction firms to embark on the PAMSCAD projects. The core objective was to educate indigenous firms on modern contract procurement as well formulate proposals to enhance private sector participation in government contracts. In the Northern Region, Lidra was selected together with Savanah Construction Ltd, Iddal Company Ltd and Hem Ltd. In January 1989, Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Mr. Amadu, Haruna Ibrahim and Mohammed Adam Yahaya participated in a four-day workshop organized by the Civil Engineering and Building Contractors Association of Ghana in Takoradi in the Western Region under the PAMSCAD sponsorship.<sup>150</sup>

Under the PAMSCAD initiative, Lidra was awarded a contract to rehabilitate bungalows belonging to the State Insurance Company at Lamasheigu in Tamale in 1989. This project was funded by the World Bank under the PAMSCAD initiative program. According to Abdul Rahaman, it was the biggest government contract won by Lidra throughout the 1980s. However, Lidra was faced with a number of problems notably were limited pledges and delays in the release of pledged funds from government. Funds were not readily available to pay workers and to buy project materials. These challenges forced Lidra to secure a loan from the Agriculture Development Bank to complete the project.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 157

<sup>150</sup> Engineering and Building Contractors Association of Ghana, meeting handbook 13-17 January 1989, Takoradi

<sup>151</sup> Abdul Rahaman, Interview. Rahaman could not remember the amount that was borrowed and how this loan was paid.

As noteworthy as the objectives of PAMSCAD were, it also ran into a number of problems. It was largely criticized for lack of its integration into the core design of adjustment and the continues rise in inflation figures and currency depreciation which exacerbated project cost and poverty in the country.<sup>152</sup> At the same time, the East-West division had collapsed as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1989. A unipolar world saw the West pushing for the promotion of its style of democracy, most of the times, through political upheavals.<sup>153</sup> The World Bank and the IMF had made it a condition of their continued aid that the Ghanaian government provide more assistance to local entrepreneurs and carry out more discussion with the business associations to consider the needs of the private sector.<sup>154</sup>

With state enterprises failing to help achieve economic growth and entrepreneurial development in the period prior to the 1990 it was perceived that small-scale industries could spearhead the economic recovery process in Ghana if they were supported. Thus, by the 1990s, it had become the focus of discussion in development circles that small-scale sector entrepreneurs could be a source of dynamic growth. It was these internal and external pressures that forced the PNDC government to return the country to constitutional rule.<sup>155</sup>

When the civilian government took office it was expected that government would allow the private sector to do business. The liberal state, however, came into being with the same economic policies prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank that had been pursued by the PNDC. It was clear that copious market reforms had not resolved

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<sup>152</sup> Danso-Boafo, *J.J. Rawlings*, 158

<sup>153</sup> C.K. Angkosaala & H. A. K. Safo, *John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana: Biography and Legacy of an African Icon* (Ghana: Yamens Press Limited, 2012)

<sup>154</sup> *ibid*

<sup>155</sup> Menka, *The River in the Sea*, p, 197

the economic crisis facing the country.<sup>156</sup> As a constitutional government, however, Rawlings was bent on managing an efficient government apparatus and therefore took a lot of interest and invested much on reforming the bureaucracy. Consequently, the National Development Planning Commission was created with Mr. P. V. Obeng as chairman. The NDPC was to advise government on development planning policies and strategies.<sup>157</sup>

The NDPC first prepared a long-term perspective National Development Policy Framework which clearly showed the strategic direction of national development over 25-years period from (1996-2020). This policy was later re-christened Ghana-Vision 2020. This programmes and policies were to be implemented through a series of medium-term 5 years. The first step: 1996-2000 was to improve infrastructure development in areas such as health, education and transport.<sup>158</sup> The implementation of these programmes witnessed a significant contracts awarded to Lidra and other private construction firms between 1996 and 2000.

As stated early, one of the challenges Lidra faced in the 1980s was lack of qualified construction professionals with basic knowledge in construction work. Various steps were taken to help address this challenge. In December 1994, Lidra with his staff embarked on one-month seminar and training programme in Wa, the Upper West Region to acquire the necessary skills on contract management, practical work and administration. This program was dubbed Contract Management and Administration sponsored by the World Bank through the Ministry of Roads and Highways under the Transport Rehabilitation Project (TRP-2) Training Component.<sup>159</sup> Again, on 2 October 1995, Lidra dispatched four of its staff members namely: Umar Mustak,

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<sup>156</sup> Kwame A. Ninsin, "Market and Liberal Democracy," in *Ghana: One Decade of the Liberal State*, ed. Kwame Bofo Arthur (Dakar: Codesria Books, 2007), 96

<sup>157</sup> Danso-Boafo, *J.J Rawlings*, 204

<sup>158</sup> *ibid*

<sup>159</sup> Abdul Rahaman, interview.

Mashud Issaf, Abubakari Jomo and Abdulai Iddirisu to be trained at the Labor Intensive Base Training School in Koforidua in the Eastern Region. This program was sponsored by PAMSCAD.<sup>160</sup> These seminars and trainings helped to improve the performance of Lidra.

In 1994, government awarded Lidra the upgrading and expansion of the Wulensi-Damanko and the Yendi-Bimbilla feeder roads in the Northern Region. It was estimated that work would finish by the close of the year. However, Lidra was interrupted by the 1994 inter-tribal conflict between the Komkomba and the Nanumba ethnic groups. This conflict generally affected all activities in the area. There was dislocation in trade which resulted in shortages of imported goods. Shops closed many selling points, for the whole period. Suppliers of cement had placed restrictions on supply. In effect, goods such as cement, iron sheets, petrol, kerosene and diesel became very scarce. Although nobody was reported killed, considerable damage was done to property such as generators, water-pipes, cement, wheelbarrows and other sophisticated machines were set ablaze and the lives of Lidra's staff were threatened. Shortage of building materials brought construction and other building projects to an abrupt end.<sup>161</sup>

The shortage of building materials and the rationing of petrol and diesel led to a reduction in the volume of motor traffic. The situation aggravated to the extent that some contractors within the area resorted to stealing.<sup>162</sup> For example, Jahinfo Company Limited, a neighboring construction company, took advantage of Lidra's absence and began to loot gravels gathered for the Wulensi-Oti Damanko project.

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<sup>160</sup> Letter from M. Z. Duncan-Borigu (Administrative Manager Lidra) to the Project Engineer (PAMSCAD), Department of Feeder Roads, Koforidua, Ref. No. LL/LIBTS/DFR/95, 2 October 1995.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Fusheini Abdulai, secretary of Lidra Construction Limited, Tamale, 17 December 2017.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid*

Sympathizers of Lidra became worried about this development. This was a letter written by a sympathizer:

I wish to write to you this letter to inform you about the collection of your gravel at Wulensi. The gravel that you gathered on the Gbangbaliga road has been totally collected by one Construction Company named “Jahinfo Company Limited.” In this regard, I would like to know whether you gave them the permission to collect it or not. In case you are the one who gave them the permission to collect the gravel give a reply. But if also you are not the one who authorized them let me know again. However, we have waited for your coming unabated even though you were heavily affected during the conflict. We are totally worried about the way the road is. In your reply let me know when you would come and continue with the work. Trust me you are safe now.<sup>163</sup>

According to Abdulia, huge sum of money was spent to buy new equipment and materials to complete the project. At the same time, human labor became scarce and expensive because many particularly the youth, fled the area to save their lives. Despite these challenges, Lidra remobilized funds and personnel and completed the projects later in 1996.<sup>164</sup>

In 1996, government in collaboration with the Department of Feeder Roads launched the Labor Intensive Road Construction Standard Project. This policy was aimed at rehabilitation of roads in the rural areas. In the Northern region, beneficiary communities were Gushie-Adayili (10.10km), Zion-Nyamandu (4.0km), Tampion-

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<sup>163</sup> Letter from Alhaji Assimiwu Mahama then Chairman of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) for Wulensi to Alhaji Aliu Mahama, 9 November 1995.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid*

Kukpaligu (6.5km) and the Larigu-Kpalung feeder roads. All these projects were awarded to Lidra at an estimated cost of Four Hundred and Sixty-Eight million, Nine Hundred Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty-Seven Cedis Twenty Pesewas (¢ 468, 900, 337. 20).<sup>165</sup>

Within the same initiative, Lidra was awarded the Tolon-Savelugu, Savulugu-Nantong, Jimli-Jito, Yendi-Gundoh and Lahaja-Bimbilla roads rehabilitations and expansions. According to Umar Mustak, the expansions of Tolon-Savelugu and the Jimli-Jito roads were met with serious resistance from the people in these communities. This was because most farmlands along these roads were affected. On one of these occasions, Lidra was chased away on the Tolon-Savelugu road.<sup>166</sup> In order to meet contract deadline, Lidra persuaded the affected landowners by paying compensations in the form of money.<sup>167</sup>

In February 1997, Lidra was awarded the construction of Zabzugu rural health and Tamale Polyclinic (now Tamale West Hospital) with two semi-detached bungalows. These projects were sponsored by the \$ 9.5m loan fund from Saudi Fund for Development by the government of Ghana to establish health centers in 35 rural communities in the country to combat the spread of diseases as well as educate rural communities on health issues.<sup>168</sup> These facilities were also to network the rural areas to their regional hospitals by modern communication and transport.<sup>169</sup> Similar efforts

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<sup>165</sup> Letter of contract acceptance from the Regional Office of the Department of Feeder Roads Tamale copied to Lidra Construction Limited. (Reference no: MFEP/NR/CONT/VOL.3/449), 17 September 1996.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Umar Mustak, Tamale, 17 December 2017.

<sup>167</sup> See Appendix for receipts of beneficiaries and their thumbprints.

<sup>168</sup> Among other beneficiary communities were Madina, Botianor, Nima and Weija in the Greater Accra Region, Tolon, Palbe, Makayili, Zabzugu, Wenchiki and Kpandai in the Northern Region, Agona, Betiako and Bodwesango in Ashanti, Dorimo, Issa, Babile, Bulenga and Bulsei in the Upper West and Nangodi, Zongoyire, Binduri, Chuchuliga and Namo in the Upper East. The rest were Dzemeni, Kwamikrom and Boraie in the Volta Region, Amantin, Badu and Nkran Nkwanta in the Brong Ahafo Region, Kasoa and Ajumaku in the Central Region, Huni Valley and Elubo in the Western Region and Somanya and Begoro in the Eastern Region

<sup>169</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 20 February 1997, p. 11 for more details about these projects see this graphic,



were made in the area of education. Science Resource Centers were established in some selected Senior Secondary Schools to enhance teaching and learning of Science subjects. In the Northern Region, Lidra was awarded the construction of Science Resource Center at the Salaga Senior Secondary School and Teachers accommodations at E.P. Training College in Bimbilla.<sup>170</sup>

The three projects in Tamale, Bimbilla and Salaga were completed without challenges whilst the Zabzugu project was halted following an outbreak of chieftaincy succession dispute in Zabzugu. The dispute obstructed material supply. Human labor became very scarce as workers demanded higher wages. A letter copied to Aliu Mahama (Manager) read.

There is a very serious conflict within Zabzugu Township. Everybody is being scared and threatened. The sub-chiefs are divided, and some are even requested to report to Ya-Na at Yendi. So, do everything possible and let us have the materials and personnel required to complete the work before things get worse. There is no security at all in Zabzugu. The D.C.E has left for Tamale for no reason. Kindly attend to this our plight and let us have the mentioned materials to complete the work. ...again, the local labour are demanding thousand and two hundred cedis ₵1, 200.00 per day as wages. This has been frequent demands, but I always try to control it. Because other contractors are paying ₵2, 00.00 a day because people are not willing to work so the few are demanding higher wages. I have been able to calm them down but let us do something about this.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Interview with Umar Mustak, Tamale, 17 December 2017.

<sup>171</sup> Letter from M. Mustak Umar site manager for Zubzugu rural health to Alhaji Aliu Mahama Tamale, 23 June 1997

The facility was later completed and handed over on 11 December 1998.

By the close of 1997, Lidra succeeded in expanding its activities beyond the borders of Northern region and started to win contracts outside the region. In November 1997 for example, government awarded Lidra the rehabilitation of the Kintampo-Prang road in the Brong Ahafo region and the re-gravelling of Paga-Kyaare, Funbisi-Uwasi, Zuarungu-Gambibgu feeder roads. At the same time, Goil Company awarded Lidra the building of the Bolgatanga Lorry Park and Goil filling station. All these projects were in the Upper East Region of Ghana.<sup>172</sup>

In 1998, Lidra won Sankpala and Tijo stock water facilities projects in Damongo and Yendi districts respectively. He was again awarded the construction of a community dam at Manguli, a suburb of Tamale in the Northern region. These projects were part of the Economic Recovery Program policy to improve livestock production in the three Northern regions. The program emphasized effective vaccination to control contagious diseases and teach livestock producers, in these regions, the development and maintenance of dry season water supply, dry season feeding of oxen for animal traction and fattening program.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> National Feeder Roads Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project (NFRMP) Phase II Zone I, Contract No. DFR/NFRMP/REH. 2/ICB/UE-BA/3/94, Dated 15 September 1997

<sup>173</sup> Mike Oquaye, *Politics in Ghana 1982-1992* (Accra-Ghana: Tornado Publication, 2004), 461



**MAGULI DAM**



**TIJO WATER PROJECT**

Similar projects within the year were the 20.1km rehabilitation project of the Saboba-Chereponi road financed by the Canadian High Commission to Ghana, Mr. John Schram through the Canada Fund for Peace Initiatives (CAPI). Other impressive works were the rehabilitation and construction of the, Vagu-Tibung, Sawla-Silokong and the Sawla-Grunpe bridges all in the Northern region. It was recorded that all the bridges were made of permanent steel and concrete. By the year 2000, all these roads were completed without challenges.

Some other contracts were not completed by 2000. These were the re-sealing of Tamale-Yendi road, construction of four teachers' bungalows, at Pishigu, Bagurugu Yong and Tamaligu, and the construction of SSNIT offices and road at Tamale all in the Northern region.<sup>174</sup>

The timing of contract awards increased Lidra's financial capacity and improved its professional competence and relevant experience. More importantly, activities in the construction industry tend to be relatively labor-intensive and utilized low levels of technology, which demanded more employees. Thus, while increasing its financial

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<sup>174</sup> Fusheini Abdulai, interview.

capacity and professional competence, Lidra was at the same time employing the bulk of productive population within these areas. As a result, Alhaji Aliu Mahama was elected as Chairman of the Association of Northern Regional Constructors in 1996. Aliu's leadership was centered on problem solving between contractors and clients at the same time, ensuring unity among members in the association. His leadership succeeded in bringing the association closer to government and other non-governmental bodies for the first time in the history of the association which helped to improve the deplorable roads, inadequate health facilities and other infrastructure development to meet the needs of the people in the Northern region. His success in the construction industry provided him more wealth and experiences to invest in other lucrative businesses such as sports.



### **Inauguration ceremony as Chairman of the Association of Northern Regional Constructors**

#### **3.4 Other Businesses**

Alhaji Aliu Mahama was one of the founding fathers of the Real Tamale United Football Club which was established on 12 September 1976.<sup>175</sup> As an enthusiastic football fan, Aliu contributed greatly towards the development of this club and the promotion of other sporting disciplines in the region. The reason behind the establishment of the club was to stop the constant drift of young talented footballers from the North to the South where prosperous clubs existed and still exist. Again, the club was to serve as a symbol of unity to all Northerners.

The club succeeded in discovering and nurturing Ghana's most celebrated footballer, and indeed Africa's footballer of the year for three consecutive years (1991, 1992 and 1993), Abedi Ayew Pele. Among other players produced were Mohammed Gargo, Abubakari Damba, Haminu Dramani, Ahmed Dawud and many others. A very

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<sup>175</sup> Among others were Alhaji Rahim Gbadamosi, Mr. B. A Fusheini, Dr. Baba, Mr. Aare Jimoh Ashiru, Mr. Aminu Amadu, Hon. Malik Alhassan, Mr. Seidu Hamidu to mention just a few. All these were elites from the North.

significant aspect of the management of the RTU was that none of the executives was a wealthy businessman who could use his or her resource to manage it. However, according to Gbadamosi, Alhaji Aliu Mahama in his quiet self-effacing nature, contributed financially to meet the needs of many of the players and to keep them comforted and contented.<sup>176</sup>

In 1991, Aliu was appointed to serve on the Board of Directors of the club after years of love and support for the development of sports in the region. In a letter:

I have the pleasure of informing you that you have been appointed to serve as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Real Tamale United Sporting Club. Your appointment which forms part of the restructuring exercise currently going on within the club, has come as a result of your love and unflinching dedication to the club and to the general development of sport in the region.<sup>177</sup>

Immediately Alhaji Aliu Mahama assumed office, the Ghana Middle League was upgraded to a professional league and football clubs became corporate entities. This meant that individuals and reputable organizations could invest and own shares in football clubs in Ghana. Other major reforms were the incorporation of clubs as a public company limited by shares, the contractual arrangement between club and player, transparency and accountability through an enhanced management system in the club, the need for supporters to become members of the company through share-acquisition, among others.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Gbadamosi, *Events*, 170.

<sup>177</sup> Letter from W. W. Zakari, Chairman (IMC) and Deputy Regional Secretary (p) PNDC to Alhaji Aliu Mahama, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1991. Ref. No. RTU/G/01.

<sup>178</sup> Minutes of the maiden meeting of the Board of Directors of Real Tamale United Limited held in Tamale, 26 December 1993, p. 2

While clubs in the South part of Ghana were sponsored by reputable firms and corporations, RTU was left completely unsupported due to the absence of firms in the North. For example, Obuasi Goldfield Football Club was established and sponsored by Ashanti Goldfields, Accra Hearts of Oak was also sponsored by Ghana Ports and Harbour and clubs like Cape Coast Mysterious Dwarfs, and Kumasi Asante Kotoko also had assistance from various companies. The financial constraints of RTU led to mass transfer of players such as Stephen Baidoo to Goldfields, Ibrahim Dossey to Hearts, Tanko Jetumah to Saudi Arabia and many others.<sup>179</sup>

As a businessman searching for more opportunities, Alhaji Aliu Mahama invested ₵100 000000 (GH₵10, 000 today), in RTU to give it a start to professional league.<sup>180</sup> Thus, from 1992, Alhaji Aliu Mahama was the Chairman of the Board and a major shareholder of RTU. He was the Chairman from 1991 to 2000 when he resigned. These two positions shored up Alhaji Aliu Mahama's financial fortunes, because he was paid as Chairman of the board as well as received his investment returns.<sup>181</sup>

The life of Alhaji Aliu Mahama, as described here, showed that from 1982 to 2000, he succeeded in making the best out of his skills as a trained engineer as well as took advantages around him to establish himself in other areas. It can be argued therefore that the PNDC and the NDC governments were not entirely anti-business as perceived particularly to contractors. At the very least, roads were still needed; maintenance of existing dams and systems still had to continue. Therefore, if governments policies within these periods of review had failed to make Ghanaians particularly the private sector wealthy and financially independent, it did support private contractors like

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<sup>179</sup> *ibid*

<sup>180</sup> *ibid*

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Mohammed Bako Alhassan, a sport presenter, Radio Savana Tamale, 13 December 2018.

Lidra. The skills Aliu acquired and the money accumulated from the private sector provided a powerful influence on his future career. The next chapter examines Aliu's early political stints, the role he played in reorganizing the Danquah-Busia Tradition and later his nomination as a running mate and contribution to the victory of the NPP in the 2000 elections.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### POLITICS IN THE BACKYARD, 1978-2000

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter examines Aliu's early political life. The political positions he contested, positions he occupied through nomination and political party affiliation from 1978-2000. Attention is given to Aliu Mahama's contributions to the reorganization and activities of the Danquah-Busia-Dombo Tradition and later the New Patriotic Party in Ghana's Fourth Republic and how he suspended his private business and returned to public service as a politician. What was Aliu Mahama's political affiliation and involvement in politics prior to 2000? Why was he chosen to partner the presidential candidate of the New Patriotic Party, the offshoot of the Danquah Busia-Dombo political tradition?

#### 4.1 Early Political Stints

In 1978, some significant political developments took place. The SMC2 passed the political Parties Decree 1978 (SMCD 208), which forbade political parties to use any identifiable symbols, slogans or colours which resemble or nearly resembled those of any proscribed political party or those used in connection with the Union Government referendum. It also forbade the use of the name or any name that resemble the name of any political party. It also passed the Elections and Public Office Disqualification Decree, 1978 (SMCD206), under which a total of 104 people were disqualified.<sup>182</sup>

General Frederick Akuffo also inaugurated a Constitutional Commission which was charged with the revised task of preparing a constitution for the establishment of an interim, transitional national government. The Ghana Bar Association and other civil society organization such as the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) and the

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<sup>182</sup> Agape Kanyiri Damwah, "Dr. Hilla Liman 1934-1998: His Life and Times" (Mphil. diss., University of Cape Coast, 2011), 66

University Teachers' Association called on Akuffo to dissolve the Commission Drafting Commission, claiming that, despite the revised mandate, the Commission was likely to be compelled to design a modified form of union government.<sup>183</sup>

In spite of these challenges, the Commission promulgated the constitution of the Third Republic. The constitution provided for a multi-party, pluralistic state which specifically forbade the re-emergence of a one-party state. General Frederick in fulfillment of his promise made on November 30 1978, announced that the ban on party politics nationwide had been lifted on January 1, 1979. Another step towards returning the country to a civilian rule was taken when the Electoral Commissioner Justice Kingley Nyinah, announced that District Assembly elections were to be held before the presidential and parliamentary polls.<sup>184</sup>

While in Tamale, Aliu showed interest of becoming an Assemblyman of the *Konfong* Electoral Area in Yendi then occupied by Alhaji Ibrahim Noga, a teacher at the Yendi Primary School. According to Alhaji Zibllila, by 1978, not only were the youth alienated by Alhaji Noga, but some of the chiefs alienated by Na Ibrahim who was the chief of Galgu a suburb of Yendi and father of Alhaji Ibrahim Noga. This provided Aliu a fair chance to contest Alhaji Ibrahim Noga, who had also showed interest.<sup>185</sup>

On the other hand, Alhaji Ibrahim Noga argued that Aliu initially did not show interest, but later emerged strongly through family influence to contest him.<sup>186</sup>

Significantly, it was in 1978 that Aliu Mahama embarked on a pilgrimage to Mecca. While in Mecca, his campaign was led by his family and friends. He returned few weeks before the day of election and reorganized his campaign by sharing gifts and receiving greetings from his constituents. His campaign message was 'peace and

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<sup>183</sup> *ibid*

<sup>184</sup> Kwasi Jonah, "Political Parties and the Transition to Multi-Party Politics in Ghana," in *Ghana Transition to Democracy*, ed. Kwame Ninsin (Accra: Freedom Publication, 1997), 75

<sup>185</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, interview.

<sup>186</sup> Alhaji Noga is currently the regent of Galgu skin, a suburb of Yendi.

development for all'. On the day of election, turnout was massive and peaceful. Alhaji Aliu Mahama won massively.<sup>187</sup>

As an Assemblyman, he was noted to have influenced the drilling of two boreholes for the electoral area. He also organized monthly clean-up exercises as well as liaised with the Ghana Health Service to organize vaccination campaigns against Guinea Worm and other infectious diseases. As a sports enthusiast, Aliu organized football matches during the annual Damba festivals to foster unity among his people.<sup>188</sup> The responsible and onerous role Aliu Mahama played through his practical participation in the local politics of his Electoral Area in the 1970s was significant.<sup>189</sup> It may well be said that unknown to him, he had embarked upon his apprenticeship for political leadership, beginning, with his Electoral Area.

Alhaji Aliu Mahama was an Assembly member until December 1981 when Rawlings overthrew Limann government and placed himself as the Chairman of the PNDC. The Proclamation of the PNDC suspended the 1979 constitution. This meant that the provisions of the Constitution which guaranteed fundamental human and political rights to the people of Ghana ceased to have legal or political effect. Alhaji Aliu Mahama's position as an Assemblyman had also come to an end. According to Alhaji Abdul Rahaman, Aliu Mahama was not happy about the unexpected turn of events.<sup>190</sup> The PNDC government banned all political and party activities in the country until the late 1980s when the government was pressured by both internal and external bodies to return the country to civilian rule.

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<sup>187</sup> Alhaji Noga could not remember the results margins, but he narrated that he lost with a wide margin votes.

<sup>188</sup> Damba festival is a festival celebrated by the Mole-Dagbani (Mamprugu, Dagbon and Nanug)

<sup>189</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, interview.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid

## 4. 2 The Road to Ghana's Fourth Republic

It was obvious in Ghana by the late 1980s that the culture of silence, which had paralysed political dissent in Ghana, had given way to political activities. In 1987, an eminent scholar who had retired from the University of Ghana, Professor Albert Adu Boahen had delivered the annual J. B. Danquah Memorial Lectures under the title *The Ghanaian Sphinx: A Contemporary History of Ghana 1972-1987*, which contained a myriad of criticism against the dictatorship of J.J. Rawlings. The professor had used the story of Sphinx, the man-eating monster in Sophocles's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, as a metaphor for his country's military dictatorship.<sup>191</sup> The lectures set the country ablaze with agreements and disagreements about what the professor had to say as he had quoted James Baldwin's *Fire Next Time* to conclude. Many believed that the culture of silence was broken with the lectures.<sup>192</sup>

Adu Boahen's speech was significant in that it was almost the first broadcast against the PNDC to be widely reported inside the country. The lectures were also viewed as the point from which it was possible to trace the resurgence of an articulated opposition. By 1990, the PNDC found that it was up against an opposition with an agenda of its own.<sup>193</sup>

Interestingly, the Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ) was immediately formed with Professor Adu Boahen as Chairman. Executive Members included Johnny Hansen, Ray Kakraba Quarshie, Obeng Manu, Kwesi Pratt Junior, Dan Lartey, John Ndebugre, A. Owusu Gyimah and Akoto Ampaw. This movement was basically a platform to resist the Rawlings dictatorship, canvass for the restoration of the

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<sup>191</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 35

<sup>192</sup> *ibid*

<sup>193</sup> Nugent, P, *Big Men, Small Boys and Politics in Ghana: Power, Ideology and the Burden of History, 1982-1994* (Accra: Pinter Publishing, 1995), 188-190

fundamental rights of Ghanaians and the lifting of the ban on political activities.<sup>194</sup> However, the Rawlings-led PNDC was not overly interested in Ghana's democratization process.<sup>195</sup> Rawlings maintained his famous answer "Hand over to whom?", anytime he was asked when he was going to hand over power.<sup>196</sup>

Meanwhile, internal agitations from civil society organizations were gathering momentum to force Rawlings to return the country to civilian rule. At the same time, the weak economic base of the nation made the PNDC government extremely vulnerable to external pressures, especially in the late 1980s when leading donors and development partners imposed political conditions on aid recipients in undemocratic regimes.<sup>197</sup> The United States for example had advised dictatorial leaders to "open societies that value individual rights, respect the rule of law, and have open and accountable governments provide better opportunities for sustained economic development than do closed systems which stifle individual initiative."<sup>198</sup> These conditions forced Rawlings to revisit his political agenda promised during the 1981 'revolution.' In their revolutionary statements, Rawlings promised Ghanaians a 'new' democracy, a 'true' democracy, a 'real' democracy and a 'participatory' democracy.<sup>199</sup> Various political steps were therefore lined-up to end its dictatorial rule and to return the country into multi-party democratic rule.

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<sup>194</sup> Kwame A. Ninsin, *Ghana's Political Transition 1990-1993* (Accra, 1996), 15

<sup>195</sup> Kwame Bofo Arthur, "A Decade of Liberalism in Perspective," in *Ghana: One Decade of the Liberal State*, ed. Kwame Bofo Arthur, (Dakar, Codesria Books, 2007), 3

<sup>196</sup> Danso-Bofo, *J. J. Rawlings*, 170

<sup>197</sup> Arthur, *A Decade of Liberalism in Perspective*, 3

<sup>198</sup> Nelson J. M and S. J. Eglinton, "Encouraging Democracy: What Role for Conditioned Aid?," *Policy Essay* no. 4 (1992)

<sup>199</sup> Joseph Ayee, "The Measurement of Decentralization: The Ghanaian Experience, 1988-92," *African Affairs* 95, no. 378 (1996): 33

In November 1988, the PNDC promulgated the PNDC Law 207 to give legal backing to the creation of District Assemblies (DAs) in each of the 110 districts of the country.<sup>200</sup> One of the steps which the PNDC took was to organize non-partisan district assemblies' elections in 1988/89 to elect two-thirds of the membership of the DAs. The remaining one-third was nominated by the PNDC in consultation with some economic groupings in the districts, for example, teachers, ex-police and military personnel and chiefs.<sup>201</sup>

The District Assemblies were to become the focal points of development at the village and town levels. The principle of popular participation was given meaning through the assemblies where decisions directly affecting the lives of the people were to be taken. The objective of the elections was for a system of local government of the people, by the people and for the people. In other words, it was for a system that gave the voters power to exercise control over their own affairs.<sup>202</sup>

This time round, Alhaji Aliu Mahama refused to contest the 1988/1989 District Assembly election even though he still retained his popularity and support from his people in Yendi. On the other hand, his popularity as a successful businessman and a football administrator drew the attention to the PNDC to Aliu's leadership qualities and contributions to society. As a result, he was nominated by the PNDC government in consultation with various stakeholders in Tamale to serve the Tamale Municipal Assembly as a committee member.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> *ibid*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 36

<sup>202</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 2 January 1991. See also Kwame A. Ninsin, *Ghana's Political Transition 1990-1993* (Accra, 1996), p. 59, Joseph Ayee, "The Measurement of Decentralization: The Ghanaian Experience, 1988-92" *African Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 378, 1996. P.33, For comprehensive discussions on Rawlings pronouncements and electoral statistics.

<sup>203</sup> Alhaji Ziblilla, interview.

The PNDC also set up the National Commission for Democracy under a former Judge, D. F. Annan to facilitate the democratization process. After the country tour of the Commission between 5 July 1990 and 9 November 1990, the consensus was that Ghanaians were still interested in party politics.<sup>204</sup> The research revealed further that Rawlings popularity could win him the elections if he contested. A nine-member Committee of Experts had also been set up to make proposals before a constituent assembly, called Consultative Assembly, to draw up the 1992 Constitution.<sup>205</sup> Pursuant to the plan outlined in Rawlings' now famous broadcast, the draft proposals for the new constitution were put before the electorate in a national referendum on April 28, 1992, organized by an Interim National Electoral Commission under the chairmanship of Justice Josiah Ofori-Boateng.<sup>206</sup>

While steps were taken to approve the draft constitution, supporters of Rawlings and the PNDC were working through the Eagle Club, Friends of the Progressive Decade, Rawlings Fan Club, Development Union, Development Front, New National Club and the Front Club. Some of these clubs later amalgamated to form the United Clubs for Rawlings (UNICRAWL). Its purpose was to function as an umbrella organization for the pro-Rawlings clubs.<sup>207</sup>

With these developments, it had become apparent to all observers that the PNDC government was using all kinds of gimmicks to lay the foundations of a political party to operate on its behalf. To that end, it had encouraged the establishment of various 'clubs' whose objectives were ostensibly non-political but which were obviously intended to play an active role in the political process.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Akenten Appiah-Menka, *The River in the Sea* (Tema-Ghana: Digibooks Ghana Ltd, 2010), 195

<sup>205</sup> *ibid*

<sup>206</sup> Danso-Boafo, *J. J. Rawlings*, 175

<sup>207</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 187

<sup>208</sup> *ibid*

### 4.3 Re-Organization of the Danquah-Busia-Dombo Tradition

In 1991, the followers of the defunct Progress Party which ruled the country between 1969 and 1972, led by a veteran journalist, Attakorah Gyimah, Dr John Bilson, Reverend Dr Samuel Asante Antwi, Victor Owusu, Adu Boahen, Nana Akufo-Addo, Dsane-Selby and other patrons founded the Danquah-Busia Club in Kumasi. The objective was to promote the political philosophy of Danquah and Busia, but, in the main, it was to stand against the Rawlings dictatorship. It also canvassed for the restoration of multiparty democracy. This club soon became popular and attracted mammoth people across the country.<sup>209</sup>

The series of interviews I conducted revealed that prior to his nomination and subsequent election as the vice presidential candidate, Aliu was involved in the activities of the Danquah-Busia tradition and later the NPP. However, the most plausible argument one can put up is that he did that behind the scenes and largely because of his businesses. The Danquah-Busia-Dombo tradition was perceived to be the major political opponent to the PNDC and since government was a major client to contractors. Therefore, Aliu was scared that full participation in the tradition's activities could affected his businesses.<sup>210</sup>

However, he secretly bankrolled the club through his two friends, A. B. A. Fusheini, a middle-aged opinion leader, and Mustapha Aliu Iddris, a teacher at the Tamale Secondary School. Both were popular members of the Danquah-Busia-Dombo club in Tamale. According to Alhaji Adam, Aliu Mahama provided financial support for the establishment of the Danquah-Busia-Dombo Club in Savulugu and the renovation of an office in Tamale for the club.<sup>211</sup> He also provided accommodation to national

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<sup>209</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 36

<sup>210</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, interview.

<sup>211</sup> *ibid*



executives anytime they visited the region. “According to then Party Administrator, Mr. Antwi-Agyei, when he and the former General Secretary were dispatched by Mr Da Rocha to the north in 1991 to quietly rouse the party in anticipation that the ban on politics would be lifted, it was Alhaji Aliu Mahama who met them, arranged for their accommodation and bore most of their expenses regarding the trip.”<sup>212</sup>

To facilitate the coming together of its members and to mend the cracks between the pro-Popular Front Party and pro-United National Convention which made it to lose the 1979 elections. The club was given a new name called the Progress Party. However, the Interim National Electoral Commission objected to this name on the grounds that it would be in violation of the Proclamation Decree of the PNDC in 1981, which had proscribed all previous political parties in the country. It was therefore, decided to give the party completely new name and the name chosen was (the National Patriotic Party) which later became the New Patriotic Party. By the time this arrangements were done, the ban on party politics had been lifted and both the presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place on 3 November and 8 December 1992 respectively.<sup>213</sup>

#### **4.4 The 1992 Elections**

Ahead of the 1992 elections, the New Patriotic Party on 29 August 1992 went to their first National Congress to elect a presidential candidate. Six candidates had qualified to contest for the position.<sup>214</sup> Within such few months, almost all the candidates toured the country to campaign. Following his trump card against Rawlings, Adu Boahen had more popular support than his opponents. It was perceived that only Adu

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<sup>212</sup> Kennedy, *Chasing the Elephant*, 58

<sup>213</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*,

<sup>214</sup> Professor Adu Boahen, Dr. Dsane-Selby, Mr. J. A. Kufuor, Dr. Safo Adu, Dr. J. A. Addison and Mr. J. A. Kodua

Boahen could stand up to Rawlings during the election. Indeed, the Professor won convincingly with 56.6 percent to lead the party during the 1992 elections.<sup>215</sup>

Perhaps for Kufuor, the 1992 congress provided an opportunity for him to strengthen his relationship with Alhaji Aliu Mahama who had distinguished himself as a wealthy businessman and a sympathiser of the Danquah-Busia Tradition. According to Hajia Rahamatu, the two were friends since the 1980s as businessmen and football administrators. Kufuor was into transport, bricks and tiles businesses which he had established in Kumasi and Atiwama Nwagbagya respectively and made supplies to companies including Aliu's Lidra firm in Tamale. And anytime he travelled to the north, he endeavoured to visit Aliu in Tamale.<sup>216</sup>

During one of his visits, Kufuor made a friendly request to sponsor the education of Farouk Umar Aliu Mahama who was getting ready to enter secondary school.<sup>217</sup> In 1997, Farouk was admitted at Prempeh College in Kumasi to pursue his secondary education under Kufuor's care. According to Farouk, Kufuor provided all his needs and served as a role model. It was in the house of Kufuor that Farouk learned to speak Twi and also acquaint himself with some Akan cultures and traditions. At the time he entered Prempeh his results show that he was an average student, but he progressed steadily in Prempeh to place third position in class during his final year.<sup>218</sup> Perhaps, it was this generosity and relationship that would later influenced Aliu's decision to render his unflinching support to Kufuor in all the elections he contested.

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<sup>215</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 195

<sup>216</sup> Kufuor was the Executive Chair of the great Kumasi Asante Kotoko Football Club while Aliu was also an Executive member of the Real Tamale United Football Club.

<sup>217</sup> Son of Aliu Mahama.

<sup>218</sup> Interview with Alhaji Farouk Umar Aliu Mahama, 28 November 2019, Accra.

During the electioneering campaign, Aliu was noted to have financially supported Roland Alhassan whom Adu Boahen had nominated as his running mate. According to Alhaji Ziblilla, Aliu Mahama financed some campaign expenses of Mr Alhassan and his campaign team. He was believed to have financed Adu Boahen's final campaign in Tamale.<sup>219</sup> In spite of this, the NPP lost the election, securing 30.4 percent while the incumbent NDC led by Rawlings secured 58.3 percent of the valid votes to win. The opposition parties led by the NPP disputed the result arguing that they were heavily rigged. In support of its allegation on the rigging, the NPP wrote a book titled, *The Stolen Verdict*, in which it compiled electoral malpractices in 100 out of 200 constituencies. The NPP went further to boycott the parliamentary poll.<sup>220</sup>

The opposition parties had accused the NDC of consistently authoritarian in dealing with them and had refused to respond to their suggestion that the presidential and parliamentary elections should be held on the same day. Perhaps, if the NDC had accepted the boycott would have been not possible because the boycott was as a result of the serious malpractices during the presidential election. Interestingly, the NDC prior to the elections, succeeded in persuading Aliu's closest friend A. B. A. Fusheini to their side and immediately endorsed him as NDC parliamentary candidate for Gukpegu-Sabongida Constituency in Tamale (now Tamale central). Following the national boycott by the NPP and other opposition parties, A. B. A. Fusheini had majority support and won.<sup>221</sup>

In the period of the NDC regime, A.B.A. Fusheini, tried long and hard to persuade Alhaji Aliu Mahama to switch his support from the NPP to the NDC, but without success. A. B. A. Fusheini was aware of Aliu's special qualities as a leader, which he

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<sup>219</sup> Interview with Alhaji Zimbilla, Tamale, 19 December 2017

<sup>220</sup> Appiah-Menka, *The River*, 240

<sup>221</sup> Interview with Alhaji Mohammed Adam Tamale, 12 October 2018

demonstrated as chairman of various committees, organizations and institutions in the region. According to Alhaji Adam, A. B. A. Fusheini promised to persuade his party members to endorse Alhaji Aliu Mahama as the next candidate for the Gukpegu-Sabongida Constituency as an inducement to woo him to the side of the NDC. But Aliu resisted and rejected all offers because he could not in principle join the NDC.<sup>222</sup> Aliu was convinced that the pseudo-socialist ideology of Rawlings and the NDC was not suitable for Ghana and he was sure that it would in time be repudiated by the people of the country. As a private entrepreneur, what was more important was his strong and earnest belief in the NPP's principles of constitutional governance, rule of law, sound democratic institutions, freedom of the press, and freedom of the individual and the pivotal role of private enterprise in national economic development. He therefore preferred to live with his conscience and principles and be loyal to his beliefs rather than to support the NDC.<sup>223</sup>

The lifting of ban on party politics encouraged the reorganization and formation of youth groups in the North. In 1993, Aliu Mahama and his friends tried to reorganize the Northern Study Group and the Northern Student Union which were formed in the 1950s but failed due to finance. However, through the instrumentality of Aliu Mahama, A. B. A. Fusheini, Alhaji Rahim Gbadamosi and Alhaji Mustapha Aliu Iddris and some influential members, the Dagomba Youth Association (DYA) was formed in 1994. Aliu Mahama became the first Vice President with Alhaji Rahim Gbadamosi as President. They witnessed the rise of such Associations in other regions and tribes and their lobbying activities, and felt that Dagbon must have an association

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<sup>222</sup> *ibid*

<sup>223</sup> *ibid*

if its voice was to be heard. They also felt the need to involve the youth in political activities and the need to encourage them to pursue higher education<sup>224</sup>

The DYA held its first meeting in Aliu Mahama's Kalipohini residence in Tamale. A three-member committee made up of Mustapha Aliu Iddris, Aliu Mahama and Alhaji Rahim Gbadamosi toured most parts of Dagbon, meeting the youth to explain to them the reason behind the formation of the association and the need to take their education serious. The association organized educational forums to educate the youth on leadership, peace and discipline.<sup>225</sup> On 4 November 1997, Aliu handed over to Mohammed Sanni a newly graduated student from the University of Ghana. He was honoured with a citation for his inspirations and his dedicated service rendered to the Dagomba Youth Association.<sup>226</sup>

Having agreed that the 1992 national election was rigged and hence the *Stole Verdict*, supporters and promoters of Professor Adu Boahen had argued that it was not necessary for the Party to have another congress but rather maintain the Professor since the defeat of the party was not for lack of the Professor's marketability. In any case, as an opposition party, the NPP lacked the resources with which to organise another congress in 1994.<sup>227</sup> But for the other candidates, especially, J. A. Kufuor, who had the ambition to try again, the argument did not wash. To him, there was nowhere in the party's constitution that addressed the above argument concerning rigged elections in favour of an incumbent presidential candidate. This created division between Kufour and Adu Boahen.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Interview with Alhassan Zimblim, teacher at the Kalpohini Secondary School Tamale, 23 December 2017.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid*

<sup>226</sup> Citation of Honor presented to Alhaji Aliu Mahama-Vice President of the Dagomba Youth Association, Tamale, 4 November 1997.

<sup>227</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 50

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51

It was an indication that the party leadership was in crisis. The two factions started testing the arguments on their supporters. Party platforms became avenues where the leading figures congregated for espousing opposing views and casting innuendoes.<sup>229</sup> According to Alhaji Mohammed Adam, Aliu Mahama did not appear neutral enough in the contest and repeatedly woo delegates to vote for Kufour. He led the formation of an informal group known as the FOJAK (Friends of J. A. Kufuor) which was formed in the Asante region and spread to all parts of the country. He allegedly sponsored transportation bills of delegates from Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions on the election day which was held at the Great Hall of the University of Ghana, Legon on 20 April 1996.<sup>230</sup> Kufour was selected as the new NPP presidential candidate for the 1996 elections securing 52.0% of the total valid votes cast.

#### **4.5 The 1996 Elections**

Ahead of the 1996 elections, NPP formed an alliance with the Nkrumahist and other opposition parties if, as some believed, Rawlings would be defeated in the December election. The Great Alliance campaigned on creating an economy that sees the private sector as an engine of growth and economic prosperity. However, they had little money with which to contest an election in which the incumbent government was well organized and financially endowed with state resources and virtually all businessmen supporting it. Kufuor was under pressure to mobilize funds for the elections. According to Alhaji Zibilla, Kufuor appealed to Aliu Mahama for financial support. It was revealed to me that Aliu made a huge financial donation to Kufuor and supported some of his campaign tours, particularly in the Northern regions.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> *ibid*

<sup>230</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Alhaji Zimbilla, Tamale, 18 June 2018

Aliu Mahama was noted to have also designed a ‘fuel coupon’ for NPP supporters with motorcycles and cars to access fuel for free during rallies. He also contracted Malzaa printing press in Tamale to print posters and other souvenirs in support of the Great Alliance.<sup>232</sup> According to Kufuor, in some instances, Aliu Mahama hosted him in his residence. ‘I just could not stop noticing him.’ All that while, Kufuor noted, that Aliu Mahama was not one of those persons lobbying for party position.<sup>233</sup>

Even though Kufuor argued so, such is common of wealthy entrepreneurs who want to popularize themselves for their personal interest. As a man who constantly searched for new opportunities, I see Aliu’s generous attitude towards the NPP as a clear and practical example of those businessmen and others who had ambitions of becoming political leaders. For whatever might have been the real motive behind Aliu’s generosity, the fact was that it provided a powerful base for him within the NPP and endeavored him to Kufuor who would later reward him by appointing him as his vice.

In December 1996, the NPP lost once again to incumbent President Rawlings. However, the Great Alliance performed creditably in the Northern Region, by improving its votes by 32 percent as against 16 percent in 1992. On the parliamentary elections, the opposition led by the NPP this time had little or no excuse to boycott the Parliamentary elections as they were held the same day.<sup>234</sup> After rejecting the inducement from A. B. A. Fusheni, Aliu Mahama convinced Mustapha Aliu Iddris to

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<sup>232</sup> Interview with Alhaji Mohammed Adam. This accession was corroborated in my interview with Alhassan Jihad Ibrahim, former work of Goil Company, Tamale, 17 June 2018. Jihad confirmed to me that in most instances he was responsible for fueling while Aliu Mahama took the responsibility of issuing the coupons.

<sup>233</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 19 November 2012,

<sup>234</sup> Frempong, *Political Conflict and Elite Consensus in the Liberal State*, 147. For comprehensive discussions on how NPP candidate Kufuor respected election results, see Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History: A Biography of J. A. Kufuor*, p. 62-63, see also Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition in the Politics of Ghana* p.233

contest A. B. A. Fusheini. It was alleged that campaign souvenirs, rallies and cars used for Mustapha's campaign were financed by Aliu Mahama.<sup>235</sup>

After losing two major elections, the NPP amended the party's Constitution to allow for a presidential candidate to be chosen two years before national elections. The decision was to allow the candidate enough time to tour all parts of the country and to adopt attractive campaign strategies. On 2 October 1998, the party renewed Kufuor's mandate to contest the 2000 general elections.<sup>236</sup> The party this time had decided to contest the 2000 presidential election without alliance. However, the search for a running mate became a difficult challenge.

#### **4.6 The Running Mate Conundrum**

The choice of running mates was full of uncertainties. For the NPP, it had been a guessing game but Kufuor had kept the issue close to his chest. Hawa Yakubu, a very ambitious MP for Bawku Central was expected to be nominated. Speculations were also around Courage Quashigah, National Organizer from the Volta Region and Mustapha Aliu Iddris, Member of Parliament for Gukpegu-Sabonjida in the Northern Region.<sup>237</sup> Mr. Jake Obetsebi Lamptey, National Campaign Manager of the party and Ama Busia, National Vice Chairperson were reportedly believed to be lobbying hard for the position. While Jake was said to be playing the Ga card, Ama Busia, sister of the Second Republic's prime minister, Dr. Kofi Busia was preferred by many.<sup>238</sup>

Indeed, all these personalities were stalwarts of the NPP with higher political credentials, capable of winning more support for the party. But Kufuor did not consider any of the above people, but surprisingly began to consider nominating his

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<sup>235</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>236</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 65

<sup>237</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 6 September 2000, p. 1

<sup>238</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 246



long-hidden friend Aliu Mahama, who was hitherto politically unknown, but believed to have financed the party since the early 1990s.<sup>239</sup> A decision Kufuor later revealed to Muslim leaders and Zongo chiefs that Aliu, who was not in the mainstream of politics, was not initially among the people he was considering for his running mate. Rather, Aliu was in the process of helping him to woo Dr. Edward Mahama of the P.N.C. but Dr. Mahama declined. So he decided to select Aliu after praying to God for his help.<sup>240</sup> It is therefore not out of place to say that Aliu in some measure owed his appointment to Dr. Edward Mahama, and of course to his own credentials.

To the surprise of his family and the Northern people, Aliu rejected the offer, compelling him to leave the country to the United States. According to Alhaji Zimbilla, Aliu told Kufuor that he preferred to work in the private sector than occupying party position. However, his spiritual father, Alhaji Hamza in Tamale, together with friends and party leaders in the three northern regions such as Alhaji B. K. Adama, Mr. C. K. Tadam, Mr. Salifu Imoro to mention a few persuaded Aliu to accept the offer.<sup>241</sup> It is worthy of note and of significance that even though it would be unreasonable to suppose that Aliu was a puppet whose affairs were arranged for him by these individuals, it is however, true to say that it was the influence of these people that got him the position.

Just like how Jimmy Carter's bid for the American presidency raised some questions marks in people faces when it was announced on the media, Aliu Mahama's entry into public political discussions also raised not a few eyebrows. At the National Executive

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<sup>239</sup> I could not interview Kufuor due to serious bureaucratic procedural. The information was derived from Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 246. So therefore, they may be bias on the information provided however, it gives us some understanding why Kufuor choose Alhaji Aliu Mahama.

<sup>240</sup> As stated earlier, I could not interview Kufuor due to serious bureaucratic procedural. The information was derived from Daily Graphic, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004, p 1-3. This information has been corroborated by Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 246. Although this has been recorded severally in different places, they may be bias on the information provided.

<sup>241</sup> Alhaji Zibilla, interview.

meeting, some party leaders questioned his personality in the party and felt that they were not consulted by Mr. Kufuor on his nomination of Aliu Mahama. The little unknown running mate was sharply taken through a barrage of questions of generally sceptical party leaders. As Elizabeth Ohene recalls, ‘General Secretary Dan Botwe had to extol the virtues of Alhaji Aliu Mahama after the meeting.’<sup>242</sup>

It was alleged that quite a few people believed they had been promised the running mate slot by Mr. Kufuor. Amongst these were Professor Wayo Seini and Madam Rebecca Hawa Yakubu, MP for Bawku Central. Disgusted by Kufuor’s decision, Professor Wayo Seini resigned abruptly from active politics. By his exit from politics, he had followed the examples of Dr. Jones Ofori Atta and Mr. Kwame Pianim, all former leading members of the party.<sup>243</sup>

The arguments were that as a private entrepreneur, little was known about Alhaji Aliu Mahama in politics. So, it was too expensive and time-consuming and even impossible to market him within the shortest time as a running mate of a political party they expected to unseat the NDC.<sup>244</sup> Some also challenged his nomination on the grounds that as a contractor, Aliu would not be able to understand the complexities of international politics and economics should the NPP win.<sup>245</sup> For a party that intended to wrestle power from the ruling party, these were bad signals, if the running mate was regarded as incapable.

Despite being subjected to diverse ridicule by some party leaders, Alhaji Aliu Mahama was not in the least perturbed. He knew too well that his critics were harassing him with the intention of forcing him to resign his position as the running

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<sup>242</sup> Kennedy, *Chasing the Elephant*, 58

<sup>243</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 12 September 2000, p. 3.

<sup>244</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 6 September 2000, p. 6

<sup>245</sup> Interview with Gazali, Tamale, 19 December 2017

mate. As he is said to have told his closest friend many times, “I am not a quitter and, in any case, I have to prove that there is a role for good and decent people as well in politics.”<sup>246</sup>

During the electioneering campaign, it became clear that the presumed controversial nomination was not merely of such a favourite protégé from the North. Aliu campaigned on his party’s agenda for positive change. This was a good campaign message to all Ghanaians who were yearning for improvement in their well-being. He pulled crowd and it was obvious that he was not a novice in politics. He presented himself as a disciplinarian and a self-made man who had struggled to rise from humble beginning in a particular disadvantaged area.<sup>247</sup> He was reported to have focused his campaign message on erasing the erroneous impression that the NPP was anti-alien. On one of his campaign platform he said: “If the government of the NPP after the December elections will drive away non-Ghanaians, then I will be leading a larger proportion of the people out of the country since I trace part of my parental history to the Huasaland in Nigeria.”<sup>248</sup>

The elections were contested by seven political parties-the NPP, NDC, CPP, PND, UGM, NRP, and GCPP. By all accounts the polling was conducted in a fair under the circumstance, generally peaceful. The turnout was massive. According to the international observers who witnessed and monitored the process, these elections were among the freest, fairest and most peaceful democratic elections so far held in Africa.<sup>249</sup>

When the results of the parliamentary vote were declared, the NPP secured 100 of the 200 contested seats. The NDC had 92 seats, the PNC had 3 seats, the CPP had 1 and

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<sup>246</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>247</sup> *ibid*

<sup>248</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 26 September 2000, p. 11

<sup>249</sup> Fordwor, *Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 266

four independents. In the presidential election, J. A. Kufuor and his vice presidential candidate, Alhaji Aliu Mahama, polled 48.4 percent of the presidential vote. J. E. A. Mills and his running mate, Martin Amidu, pulled 44.9 percent. As a result of the inability of any party to secure a fifty percent plus one vote as required by the constitution, a round-off was held on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2000, and Kufuor beat Mills 56.9 to 43.1 percent respectively.<sup>250</sup>

Interviews conducted and literature reviewed to ascertain the reasons for the selection of Aliu Mahama and how it contributed to the victory of the NPP revealed that his selection was rooted in four, interrelated incontrovertible factors. First, and most obviously, he was selected because of his wealth. Before the 2000 general elections, the NPP had virtually nothing in its coffers. They were cash strapped and could not organize any effective campaign due to lack of funds. “All the vehicles owned by the party were in a state of disrepair and consequently, it did not have a single car in the nine regions outside the capital, and the two cars in Accra were in a bad condition. The party was alleged to owe the car company, Concordia, \$100,000. The party also owed Auto Company of Ghana about the same amount.”<sup>251</sup> Drained of all resources himself by 1999, not much of a campaign was conducted. Kufuor’s attempts to raise money from Ghanaian communities in the United Kingdom and the United States were not particularly successful.<sup>252</sup>

To shore up the party’s financial fortunes, Kufuor nominated Aliu as his running mate. As a businessman, he had accumulated a lot of wealth that the NPP seriously and jealously needed to unseat the NDC. Therefore, he was nominated because of the pool of resources at his disposal. Besides, he had been a financier of the party since

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 267

<sup>251</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 74

<sup>252</sup> Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 246

the early 1990s. It was therefore not surprising that just a month after his endorsement, the party that had been cash-strapped, mobilized enough money to make media advertisements, organized rallies and to acquire not only cars but also motorcycles and bicycles to campaign in all the regions which contributed to the victory of the party.<sup>253</sup>

A second reason for his selection was because of his skills in the private sector. It must be pointed out unreservedly that the social, political and economic circumstances of the country had become increasingly more complex and intractable, requiring exceptional qualities of leadership background of discipline and experience. It would be recalled that Mr. Kufuor in the previous elections campaigned on creating an economy that sees the private sector as an engine of growth and economic prosperity. Therefore, Kufuor was reported to have stated repeatedly that he wanted a candidate who was a presidential material and had vast experience spanning the private sector and public life to help achieve his promises.<sup>254</sup> He therefore nominated Alhaji Aliu Mahama, who was skillful in industry as an entrepreneur with calm and inviting demeanor that could attract the private sector to join the NPP.<sup>255</sup>

Third, his selection was influenced by the party's desire to woo Northerners and Moslems, largely tagged as NDC, to campaign, vote and join the NPP. The NPP was described as anti-alien, though its origins and concerns extended to all areas of the country. Kufuor and his team were acutely aware of the Akan stereotype sticking to the shoes of the NPP and therefore needed someone like Aliu, a Northerner and a Moslem to help relax the perception of the NPP as an Akan party. As Aliu himself said in his acceptance speech after his nomination, "the NPP has a 'forest and a

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<sup>253</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, interview.

<sup>254</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 17 December 2007

<sup>255</sup> Alhaji Zibllila, interview.

coastal boy’ (referring to Kufuor’s countryside background) and a ‘savannah and a Zongo boy’ (referring to his place of origin in the north and his religious background) to make history. That is the geographical beauty of our homeland – the homeland blessed by God: The Savannah, the Forest and the Coast. It is a homeland of diversity united by one common destiny.”<sup>256</sup>

Finally, the party wanted to maintain its tradition of South-North ticket. Historically, the party had been consistent in their choice of Vice Presidential candidates from the North. Even when Victor Owusu contested for the 1979 election he picked the Tolon-Na. Alhaji Yakubu Tali a Northerner. In 1992, Professor Adu Boahen chose Roland Alhassan also a Northerner. It should not also be forgotten that when Busia, leader of the Progress Party was thrown out of Parliament and forced into exile it was Mr. Simon D. Dombo (leader of the Northern People’s Party) who acted on his behalf. It was therefore not surprising that the NPP picked Aliu who was also a Northerner.

All these were relevant qualities and considerations that influenced the selection of Aliu Mahama. The NPP therefore found a candidate who had a practical, steady mind-a quality that was necessary to give them victory even though some people within the party were of the view that he could not move the people, but at least he could convince them that he was a man of self-discipline and honest that could help the country.<sup>257</sup>

From the evidence that has been adduced so far, one important issue which is clear was the fact that Aliu did not seem to have any vice presidential ambition until events

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<sup>256</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 9 September 2000 p. 3. See also “the Mankessim Address”, the launch of Aliu’s campaign for presidential candidate of the NPP 2007., Naa Addo Speech delivered by Nana Addo during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Aliu Mahama Memorial Lecture on the team “One Ghana: Securing Our Future”, Accra, 10 December 2014

<sup>257</sup> Adam, interview.

took a dramatic turn following the refusal of Dr. Edward Mahama. And so when some people were busy lobbying to become vice presidential candidates, not a word was heard from him. His interest was basically becoming a wealthy entrepreneur.

“It is often said that leaders are thrown up by social events, especially, in times of extreme crisis and national danger when painstaking, level headed, discipline, calm confident and selfless leadership is most needed.”<sup>258</sup> How well did Alhaji Aliu Mahama execute this responsibility when his party came to power? The role he and his government played in addressing the socio-economic and political problems will form the main focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>258</sup> Damwah, *Dr. Hilla Liman*, 90

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ALIU MAHAMA IN THE POLITICS OF GHANA 2001-2009

#### 5.0 Introduction

On Sunday 7 January 2001, in the presence of Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo, Senegal's Abdoulaye Wade, Burkina Faso's Blaise Compaore, Togo's Gnassingbe Eyadema, South Africa's Vice-President, Jacob Zuma, and former Nigerian military ruler, General Abdul Salam Abubakar, Chief Justice Abban swore in Alhaji Aliu Mahama as the Vice-President. The most significant aspect of the event was that after several years in power, Rawlings had agreed to hand over power peacefully to the newly elected president and vice president. Added to this was the rise to power of Alhaji Aliu Mahama, whose political calibre and administrative quality were yet to be tested. Again, being elected as the Vice-President, Alhaji Aliu Mahama made history as the first Northerner, a Dagomba and a Muslim to occupy the highest political office in Ghana. Most importantly, for a party that prides itself on having the best intellectuals in the country in which many people wanted to be Vice-Presidents and Presidents.

This chapter examines Aliu's political career from 2000 to 2009. His political career is analyzed against the backdrop of the fourth republican politics, as a Vice President. The chapter examines the major economic, political and social policies initiated to solve the mounting problems in the country at the time. Attention will be paid to how Aliu Mahama's private sector experiences and his disdain for indiscipline reflect his political life? The contest for flagbearership and desire to lead his party and to become President of Ghana after his tenure as Vice President (constitutionally possible).



In order to place the regime in its proper historical context, the first strand of history that will be discussed in the chapter is the socio-economic and political situation in Ghana on the eve of the assumption of power of the NPP and carefully examine how Aliu and his party responded to these issues.

When the Ghana Human Development Report of 2000 was released in 2001, it presented a dismal picture of a country in misery. Ghana's economy was on the verge of collapse. Inflation was running at 40.99 percent, interest rates were in excess of 50 percent, and the cedi had depreciated by 300 percent against the US dollar from 2,550 cedis to \$1 in August 1999 to 7,700 in December 2000. Ghana's external debt stood at US\$5.8 billion, while the domestic debt was around 9 trillion cedis.<sup>259</sup> The stagnant economy had resulted in high youth unemployment, escalating poverty conditions in some areas, especially in the savanna areas, high maternal and infant mortality rate, lack of press freedom and public response to the call for behavioural change to avoid an AIDS explosion has been lukewarm.<sup>260</sup>

This picture was a perfect recipe for social unrest, industrial strife, and political instability and demanded pragmatic measures. Having won power on the basis of their positive change agenda, it could be argued that, if the coming into office of any government has ever raised hopes and expectations, it was the NPP government. They were expected to restore confidence in the private sector, ensure that the people of Ghana would enjoy the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the 1992 constitution and virtually wipe away all problems and frustrations instantly. Having been

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<sup>259</sup> Remark by Aliu Mahama during the Democratic Union of Africa, organized by the New Patriotic Party. Not dated.

<sup>260</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 139

businessmen before becoming politicians, Aliu and his Kufuor were economic moderates and approached first the economic challenges.<sup>261</sup>

### **5.1 Re-engineering the Ghanaian Economy**

As a Vice President, Aliu became a central player of the Economic Management Team and all other issues regarding Ghana's economy. In most cases, he chaired the Committee alongside other economic experts such as Yaw Osafo-Mafo, J. H Mensah, and Paul Acquah as well as other senior policy advisors. The committee list reflected that almost all the members were highly professional, technocratic, statistician and elitist.<sup>262</sup>

Perhaps for Aliu, the image of Ghana's economy at this time was an opportunity to display his qualities as not only incisive, witty and dependable but also someone who could work in a team. To resuscitate such a crippling economy, bold policy initiatives were needed to transform the economy from rent-seeking capitalism and conspicuous consumerism into a system that embraced venture capitalism. In the meantime, however, the (EMT) was focused on creating a "breathing space" from the obligation to make the huge payments involved in servicing its foreign loans. The first and most significant step of the EMT was to persuade the Government to take advantage of the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC) of the World Bank in order to revive the economy.<sup>263</sup>

This decision was politically unpopular and for some time, provided the opposition parties with a lot of ammunition to question the competency of the EMT leadership including Vice President Aliu Mahama. The NDC after resisting international pressures to embrace the HIPC facility turned to describe the government decision as

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<sup>261</sup> Interview with Mr. Andrews Awuni, personal aid to Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Accra, 17 November 2018

<sup>262</sup> J. H. Mensah was a senior economist, Dr. Paul Acquah was the Government Statistician, Yaw Osafo Mafo minister of finance.

<sup>263</sup> *ibid*

a scam and shame.<sup>264</sup> Perhaps, the criticisms were a result of a lack of public discussion considering the time the pronouncement was made.<sup>265</sup> But given the complicated nature of the facility and gauging the level of education, could Aliu and his government have gotten ordinary Ghanaians to understand it?

Before its pronouncement, Aliu had explained that the government did not wish to have Ghana stuck in the HIPC programme for a long time, just as the government of the PNDC had previously become a hostage to the Structural Adjustment Programme.<sup>266</sup> Through hard work and good planning, the government managed to reach the Completion Point of the HIPC programme in three years, instead of the four years needed by other countries creating the breathing space that Aliu and his team promised. Upon reaching the completion point, Ghana immediately became eligible for cancellation of US\$2 billion of its external debts, with a further US\$2 billion to be cancelled over the next twenty years at the rate of US\$100 million a year. At the same time, it was agreed that funds from HIPC savings were to be invested in poverty-reducing programmes all over the country.<sup>267</sup>

The Government also took very good macro-economic policies that met the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) criteria. By 2004, Ghana was ranked among the first group of countries adjudged to have qualified to access the first tranche of the US Millennium Challenge Account of US\$ 1 billion. At the end of the year 2004, Ghana had again qualified for the second tranche to be disbursed during 2005.<sup>268</sup>

These were very significant achievements since it meant that Ghana had met the very stringent criteria for qualifying to share in the Fund for two years running. Largely as

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<sup>264</sup> Frempong Alexander, "Political Conflict and Elite Consensus in the Liberal State," in *Ghana: One Decade of the Liberal State*, ed. Kwame Bofo Arthur (Dakar: Codesria Books, 2007), 158

<sup>265</sup> Ghana was declared HIPC in the first budget of the NPP which was presented barely two months into administration on 9 March 2001.

<sup>266</sup> *ibid*

<sup>267</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 273

<sup>268</sup> *ibid*

a result of these achievements, the profile of Ghana's economy changed dramatically. For example, Standard and Poors, a renowned international credit rating company, scored Ghana a B+ credit rating. This put Ghana's credit rating on par with that of Brazil and higher than Turkey and Indonesia. It came as no surprise, therefore, that by the end of 2004, inflation in Ghana had dropped dramatically to 12%. At the same time, the interest rate stood at 26% and was still falling, while the Cedi had become reasonably stable.<sup>269</sup>

Another vital sector of the economy the government tackled was investment. From their private sector experiences and in accordance with the principles of the Danquah-Busia Tradition, both Kufuor and Aliu easily understood the need to involve the private sector to revive the economy. Unlike the previous administrations, the NPP declared 2004 as the 'golden age of business.' The regime also created the Presidential Special Initiatives (PSIs) for cassava, salt, textiles, garments, distance learning and oil palm. The desire was to catapult the country into industrialization and to diversify the economy.<sup>270</sup> These initiatives empowered about 25,000 cassava farmers including the Ayensu Starch Company at Bawjiase in the Central region. 70,000 jobs were also created in the textile sector with an estimated \$3.4 billion in export revenue. By 2005, Ghana became the first country in Africa to receive US approval for its textile visa system and accordingly benefited from the unprecedented US-Africa Trade relationship which conferred duty and quota-free status on trade.<sup>271</sup>

Beyond Ghana, the regime also toured most parts of the globe in search of investors. It was reported that between January 2001 to December 2007, Aliu Mahama had

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid

<sup>270</sup> Joseph R, A. Ayee, "A Decade of Political Leadership in Ghana, 1993-2004," in *Ghana: One Decade of the Liberal State*, ed. Kwame Boafo Arthur (Dakar: Codesria Books, 2007), 183.

<sup>271</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 150

made several trips to Europe and the Middle East, particularly to China, Qatar and several other places to woo investors to invest in Ghana's economy.<sup>272</sup> These trips yielded positive results as foreign countries and cooperate bodies began to invest in all aspects of Ghana's economy. For example, Ghana received the Japanese International Co-operation Assistance money to complete a Master Development Plan for the Takoradi Port. Ghana also gained an access channel to Tame Fishing Harbour by seven more meters so as to accommodate huge vessels, freeing more berths as the port for use by commercial vessels. The OPEC Fund for International Development gave Ghana \$5 million to co-finance improvements to the railway sector which for decades, had been in a state of near collapse. Many feeder roads were constructed to connect the urban cities to the hinterland or rural areas all supported by the country's development partners including the European Union, DANIDA, the Spanish Government and the International Development Association of the World Bank.<sup>273</sup>

Together with the Social Security and National Investment Bank, State Insurance Company and the Prudential Bank, the Metro Mass Transit Company Limited was founded to provide mass transportation services in major cities. A total of 183 buses from the Italian and Dutch governments were given to Ghana. To attract great outsourcing contracts, Technology Parks for Business Process Outsourcing were developed in Accra and later spread to other regions in Ghana. By 2004, the total number of telephone lines was 800, 000, with fixed lines around 300, 000. As a result of the significant economic growth, various social intervention programmes including the National Health Insurance Scheme, National Youth Employment Programme,

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<sup>272</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 1 May 2007, p. 1

<sup>273</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 172

School Feeding Programme and other poverty reduction programmes were launched.<sup>274</sup>

Ghana's economy under the influence of Aliu may be said to have chalked up the most gains in macroeconomic management, in terms of fiscal discipline and inflation control. Yet, there was some pitfall in the economy which perhaps confirmed Aliu's lack of understanding of what could be described as the paradox of Ghana's development initiatives. Indeed, economic malpractices, corruption and graft remained widespread in the administration and in the country as a whole. The incompetency within the ranks of the EMT was highlighted by the scandal concerning the International Financial Consortium (IFC). A consortium styling itself as "the IFC" offered to procure a loan of US\$300 million for the Government. It later emerged that this 'consortium' had no relationship with the IFC (International Financial Corporation). Nevertheless, the economic team under the supervision of Aliu Mahama proceeded with the transaction and persuaded parliament to give its approval for it. The result was that the projects which were expected to be financed with the loan remained on the drawing board, and Ghana was left with a financial loss of about 9 million dollars. Even though the government later cancelled the deal, top government officials including Aliu Mahama were deeply embarrassed.<sup>275</sup> It begs the question of how a Vice President who preached discipline could supervise such a corrupt deal? Perhaps, a task too big for any one man to accept the blame.

What comes across clearly throughout research works on Ghana's economy in the Fourth Republic is the significant contribution of Aliu's practical and steady mind at the critical moment in Ghana's economic history. He, perhaps more than any other

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<sup>274</sup> Keynote Address Alhaji Aliu Mahama, at the first Ecowas Business Forum held in Accra, Ghana on Monday 29 October 2007

<sup>275</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion on this see Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 278-280

Vice-President in the history of Ghana was able to identify, focus and tackled the major challenges driving the economy. It was therefore not surprising that Kufuor retained him throughout his administration as a Vice-President.<sup>276</sup>

There were several speculations that Aliu Mahama had been kept so much under the shadow of Kufuor for most of the eight years of their term that it had not been possible for him to show his own capabilities that correspond to his role as a vice president.<sup>277</sup> But to anyone who has tried to, on however slender evidence, to understand Aliu Mahama's thoughts and attitude, these seem to be odd conclusions and at variance with the facts on the ground. It could be argued that Aliu was not a political fanatic but a pragmatic one. His main concern was how to tackle problems of indiscipline which had become a social canker and needed pragmatic measures to curb. Aliu was someone who had developed a strong moral awareness, constantly searching for philosophical as well as practical answers to the questions life posed. To address the problem of indiscipline, he introduced a new ideology of discipline called Campaign to Instill Greater Discipline.

## **5.2 Aliu Mahama and the Campaign to Instill Greater Discipline**

Throughout his childhood and adult life, Aliu had developed a strong disdain for indiscipline. Unlike Kwame Nkrumah who fought corruption through Dawn Broadcast, he understood indiscipline as a behavioral problem that demanded public education. He used the state and the private media stations to campaign against the insanitary conditions that had caused disease outbreaks and cost the state a huge sum of money to prevent. The campaign slogan was 'Do the Right Thing.'<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Awuni, interview.

<sup>277</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 288

<sup>278</sup> Interview with Dr. Samuel K. Frempong, Chief Executive Officer of the Aliu Mahama Foundation, 18 August 2018

The first step in the campaign was to repeal the draconian laws of private and criminal libel which had been a potent hindrance to the operation of a free press in Ghana for a long time. The most powerful and influential instruments of the press were publicly owned and, as such, were generally under the control of the Government of the day. This public ownership extended also to radio and television broadcasting. Through subtle and sometimes overt pressures, the persons operating the various organs of the press were induced or forced to support or promote the cause of the Government of the day. These laws were repealed on 27 July 2001.<sup>279</sup>

These amendments empowered media stations to run adverts on the Campaign to Instill Greater Discipline and also provided an opportunity to easily expose and criticize misdeeds mistakes of government programmes and activities of politicians and officials. It was therefore not surprising that, when the campaign was officially launched on 2 August 2002, it became media headlines.<sup>280</sup> Public education on discipline was done on radios, TV stations and newspapers. The most cherished of all these adverts was the one showed on GTV, where a man was shown urinating in an open place with a “madman” asking him “*Wabodam*” literally mean “are you mad”. It was to educate the general public that even people who are mentally challenged could still reason that sanitation was key.<sup>281</sup>

It was alleged that the national annual solid waste production exceeded one million tonnes. Only a third of the quantity was collected with the remaining two-thirds left to impact negatively on the environment and public health. This was because plastics had replaced leaves, glass, metal and other materials as a cheaper and more effective means of carrying, storing and preserving water, food and other products. The poor

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<sup>279</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 276

<sup>280</sup> The Daily Graphic titled it as ‘The Great Campaign,’ 3 August 2002.

<sup>281</sup> Frempong, interview.



management and disposal of plastic products that were non-bio-degradable brought difficult challenges as plastic waste had littered all corners of the country, heaped at refuse dumps, polluted the beaches and the deep sea and reduced soil fertility.<sup>282</sup> Accra alone generated 270 tonnes of plastic waste daily and cost the Accra Metropolitan Assembly 2.2 billion a month to clean the city. The situation was, even more, alarming with only about 40 per cent of urban and 15 per cent of rural dwellers having access to domestic toilets. 15 per cent of urban dwellers were still using pan latrines and the majority of people depended on unsanitary public toilets.<sup>283</sup>

To tackle the unsanitary conditions, Aliu on 16 July 2004 launched a National Plastic Waste Management Programme. The programme was dubbed Collective Societal Effort to stem the increasing environmental, aesthetic and health hazards posed by plastic waste. The campaign attracted support from individuals and cooperate bodies. Among others in the campaign were, Rt. Rev. Bishop Charles Palmer Buckle of the Koforidua Catholic Diocese, Rev. Dr. Mensah Otabil of the International Central Gospel Church, Kojo Antwi and Lord Kenya, both musicians and Mrs. Gifty Affenyi-Dadzie, the President of the Ghana Journalists Association. Others were the Managing Director of Graphic Communications Group, New Times Corporation, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, TV3 and Metro TV among others.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 16 July 2004, p. 3

<sup>283</sup> *ibid*

<sup>284</sup> Over 400 million cedis was raised as start-up capital for the campaign with Alhaji Aliu Mahama pledging 50 million cedis. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development together with its agencies pledged 200 million cedis, while the Poly group of Companies presented a cheque for 50 million cedis and promised 50 dustbins to support the exercise. The campaign also received much sponsorship from private firms, both local and international. In 2004 for example, eight firms namely, British-American Tobacco, AFGO Ghana, MAERSK Ghana, Far East Mercantile, Facol Roads, AG Electricals presented ₵5 million each. The others were Crocodile Matchets which gave 60 pieces of Crocodile matchets and ₵1 million. Poly Tank Ghana presented 50 poly dustbins worthy ₵25 million. This information was retrieved from *Daily Graphic*, 16 July 2004, p. 3. *The Ghanaian Times*, 1 May 2004

In 2006, a renowned Ghanaian musician, Obrafo composed a song titled “*Nya ntetee pa*”, which literally means be discipline. This song was dedicated to the campaign against the indiscipline advocacy championed by Aliu. The lyrics of the song epitomized the need for Ghanaians to embrace discipline. Obrafo recounted the indiscipline attitude of Ghanaians and its consequences on development. He called on Ghanaians, irrespective of their political divide to support Alhaji Aliu Mahama in the fight against indiscipline. Though Obrafo's song was eulogizing the policy of a political leader within a political party, sales rose so high and enriched the singer with his popularity rising as well. It became a popular song against indiscipline on televisions, radio and churches.

The impact was that by January 2006, it created employment as reputable agencies in the private sector began to invest in waste management. Companies such as Zoomlion Ghana Limited embraced the house-to-house waste collection programme and broadened and employed more youth in street cleaning and sanitation campaigns.<sup>285</sup> For example, the company, in collaboration with the government of Ghana under the National Youth Employment Programme employed over 24,000 people to implement sanitation modules.<sup>286</sup> By the time Ghana hosted the African Cup of Nations in 2008, cities like Accra, Tamale, Kumasi and Koforidua were reported clean for visitors. The number of cholera outbreaks had been minimized. Youth unemployment had also gone down drastically.<sup>287</sup>

However, the campaign failed to achieve its total objectives of reducing spending on sanitation and disease outbreaks. The nation continued to spend huge sums of monies on diseases caused by poor sanitation. As late as September 2007, GH¢ 3.7 million

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<sup>285</sup> Frempong, interview.

<sup>286</sup> Ghanaweb.com/general news, 6 September 2018.

<sup>287</sup> Frempong, interview.

was still spent on malaria treatment which was approximately one to two per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. Malaria cases had risen to the extent that Ghana appealed to foreign countries for help. China donated anti-malaria drugs worthy 236, 000 dollars.<sup>288</sup> It was therefore not surprising that GH¢512.8 million was allocated in the 2008 budget to curb infant mortality and to promote regenerative health through adjustments and changes in the lifestyles of Ghanaians.<sup>289</sup>

Another most important area of grave concern to the NPP administration when it came into power was to empower the security services to fight in disciplinary acts such as armed robbery which had constituted a serious challenge to the country. The serial murder of about thirty Ghanaian women, which began in the run-up to the 1999 general elections ended shortly afterward, and which the police could not satisfactorily explain nor account for, justified the level of indiscipline in Ghana.<sup>290</sup>

To curb this, the NPP acquired modern communication gadgets for the Police Service, procured over five hundred new vehicles for the police, increased police strength from 13,065 to 16, 023 and devoted over 10 billion cedis to improving sanitation in police cells and police barracks. The outcome had been a swift and rapid reaction of police to addressing situations, constant police patrols and a reduction of in Ghana crime rate.<sup>291</sup>

Despite these arrangements, a regicide in Yendi, the home of Aliu in March 2002 tested his resolve and put his office in an embarrassing corner. In March 2002, the Ya-Na, Abdulai Andani II and some forty of his courtiers were murdered. Although there was no evidence that the crime had resulted from any act or omission of the Government itself, there were numerous complaints about how the Government, and

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<sup>288</sup> *The Ghanaian Times*, 6 September 2007, p. 22

<sup>289</sup> *The Ghanaian Times*, 16 November 2007

<sup>290</sup> Kumi Ansah-Koi, "The Security Agencies and National Security in a Decade of Liberalism," in *Ghana: One Decade of the Liberal State*, ed. Kwame Boafo Arthur (Dakar: Codesria Books, 2007), 197.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 198

especially the officials in charge of security, had reacted to the incident.<sup>292</sup> As a vice president, Aliu was the Chairman of the Armed Force Council and the Police Council. These were two sensitive security institutions which made it difficult for Aliu to avoid blame.

Though Aliu might appear innocent, although obtaining any details of such was a notoriously difficult task, especially when the subject was an eminent political figure. However, available evidence indicates that, when he was appointed as a running mate for the NPP, he assured the people of Dagbon that the long-standing chieftaincy dispute which bedevilled the traditional area was to end forever.<sup>293</sup> This piece of incontrovertible evidence revealed his strong resolve for peace in Dagbon. The sad thing was that Aliu was misunderstood and was never forgiven by those who felt that he had taken sides in the dispute. This particular factor in itself was one of the reasons that crippled his ambition of becoming a presidential candidate of the NPP.

But this event could not completely nullify the very substantial achievements of Aliu as a moral crusader and his inclinations for social justice. He worked tirelessly to restore peace and influenced certain developmental projects in the North.<sup>294</sup> By 2008, he succeeded in influencing his government to set up a special Development Fund of GH¢25 million to accelerate the development of the North. It was this policy that gave birth to the Savana Accelerated Development Fund (SADA) launched in 2010. In the area of infrastructure, he influenced the construction of the Tamale Sports Stadium which initially was to be sited at Kuforidua in the Eastern Region.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 281

<sup>293</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 22 September 2000, p. 11

<sup>294</sup> His government set-up the Wuaku Commission (Chaired by Justice I. N. K. Wuaku, with Professor Kwesi Yankah of the University of Ghana, Legon and Florence Brew, an educationist) and later a Committee of Eminent Chiefs to investigate the murder of the king. Though these Commissions could not identify the culprits, they succeeded in creating peace in the interim.

<sup>295</sup> According to Andrews Awuni, agreements for the construction of the stadium in Kuforidua had been reached but Aliu got matters turned in favour of the North.

The role Aliu played in national development was evident by his installation as the development chief of Sogakope in the South Tongu District of the Volta Region of Ghana. Aliu was given the stool name “Togbe Avulekpo Soga I,” meaning, the dog has overcome the leopard. The installation was in recognition of the interest shown and the leading role played by Aliu Mahama in the development of Sogakope, South Tongu District and the Volta Region in general. “We are proud and grateful to you. You are a man of action,” Togbe Soga said.<sup>296</sup>

### **5.3 The 2004 Elections and Aftermath**

By mid-2003, speculation had been rife as to whether Kufuor would retain Aliu as his running mate since the post was not filled automatically by the party's constitution. Kufuor had said in early 2003 that it was premature to think of a running mate and thus left the position open. At the last major congress of the party in Kumasi on 5 April 2004, he put that to rest and re-nominated Aliu Mahama. The 2004 presidential and Parliamentary elections were a threshold event for Aliu Mahama and democracy in Ghana. Should his party win the 7 December 2004 elections, he would be the first vice president in the political history of Ghana to be honoured twice by his compatriots. The growth of democracy, of Ghana coming of age, would also be the dividend.<sup>297</sup>

Four candidates representing four political parties contested the 2004 presidential elections. Namely, John A Kufuor of the NPP, John A. Mills of the NDC, Edward Mahama of the PNC and George Aggudey of the CPP. Unlike the 2000 elections, the NPP campaigned on their achievements and held on to its previous positive change mantra. This time, they embellished it with a slogan, So Far, So Good. The campaign

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<sup>296</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 1 February 2007

<sup>297</sup> Agyeman-Duah, *Between Faith and History*, 260

team was made up of Jake Obetsebi-Lamptey as Manager, Kwamena Bartels as his Deputy and other executive members.<sup>298</sup>

Both Kufuor and Aliu campaigned with separate teams. Aliu's campaign team was made up of; his close friend, Alhaji Mustapha Ali Iddris, Buabeng Asamoah, his personal aide, Andrews Awuni and other executive members of the NPP. The team toured all the regions and districts with Aliu as the central figure. As a campaign strategy, Aliu inaugurated a 'One Touch' Club in the three northern regions as a way of attracting the youth. The group aimed at attaining a first-round victory in the election. The groups, comprising the youth, organized keep-fit and other campaign platforms to campaign for the NPP.<sup>299</sup>

Unlike the 2000 elections, the 2004 general elections ended without a run-off. The NPP led by Kufuor and his Vice, Aliu Mahama won convincingly with 52.75 percent as against its major contender Mills of the NDC's 44.32 percent, Edward Mahama of the PNC came third with 1.92 percent and George Aggudey with 1.00 percent. In the parliamentary elections, the NPP had gained 128 out of the 230 seats, the NDC had 94, PNC 4, CPP 3 and there was one independent. The outcome of the 2004 presidential election gave Alhaji Aliu Mahama a significant place in history. On 7 January 2005, Chief Justice, George Kingsley Acquah swore in Aliu Mahama as Vice President-elect.<sup>300</sup>

One very important manifestation of Aliu Mahama's political inclinations was his participation in the 2007 presidential primaries elections of the NPP. While in office as Vice President, Aliu showed interest in becoming the presidential candidate of the NPP ahead of the 2008 elections. By this time, he had developed a flair for politics.

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<sup>298</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 284

<sup>299</sup> *The Ghanaian Times*, 12 June 2004, p. 10

<sup>300</sup> *ibid*

Speculation had been rife as to whether President Kufuor could handpick him as his successor in the manner Rawlings chose Mills in the ‘Infamous Swedru Declaration.’ However, it soon became clear that Kufuor could not handpick Aliu, not least because the NPP had a history of an open contest for the flagbearer position and also because no one in the NPP had a firm grip on the party as Rawlings had in the NDC.<sup>301</sup> Indeed, as a mass party, the NPP could not be completely free from petty squabbles and ideological differences, but the leadership of the party allowed these to create animosity and hatred among party members.

Signs beneath the surface indicated that President Kufuor did not appear neutral enough to be able to play a fatherly role in the succession process. His long-perceived and not too-hidden preference for Alan Kyerematen, instead of his two-term Vice-President, Aliu Mahama or the long-awaited Nana Akufo- Addo created factions within the party.<sup>302</sup> Consequently, several other stalwarts were induced, citing their long sacrifices for the party and its political tradition, to also bid for the presidential nomination, and thereby further complicating the process. In the end, no less than seventeen candidates put themselves up for election, and efforts to whittle this number down did not succeed.<sup>303</sup>

As these problems unfolded and the internal situation of the party worsened, Kufuor was compelled to demand the resignation of eight cabinet ministers who had declared their intention to contest and whose pre-occupation was affecting the work of government.<sup>304</sup> Clearly, since this ‘Gang of Eight’ formed the cream and the most

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<sup>301</sup> Awuni, interview.

<sup>302</sup> It was reported that Kufuor in a meeting with the aspirants said that while he had a preference amongst the aspirants, he had not gone out of his way to use state resources to support that candidate. The president reminded the gathering that as far back as 1998, Alan Kyerematen had considered contesting for the Presidency against him.

<sup>303</sup> Kennedy, *Chasing the Elephant*, 16

<sup>304</sup> They were Hackman-Owusu-Agyemang, Water Resources, Works and Housing; Nana Akufo-Addo, Foreign Affairs, Regional Cooperation and NEPAD; Kwame Addo-Kufuor, Defence; Mike Ocquaye,

experienced in the cabinet, it took some shine off government work.<sup>305</sup> The circumstances under which the NPP found itself at this time seemed to be similar to the divisions that had cost Victor Owusu the elections of 1979. The struggle between the two factions was at play with Alan and Nana Addo representing the Busia and Danquah factions respectively. For Aliu, his friends and family urged him not to attack anybody but to stay focus on his ideals. His closest friend, Alhaji Mohammed Adam had advised him “I know as the primaries get nearer, there will be a tendency for some of you to go after the President. However, he is not one of your opponent’s so leave him out as much as possible.”<sup>306</sup>

It was obvious that no more than three of the seventeen aspirants could be taken seriously. Many of the seventeen candidates were relatively unknown persons who clearly did not stand any realistic chance of being selected as NPP candidates. Of the more well-known candidates, some had been ruled out even before the contest began. For example, it was generally known that President Kufuor had advised delegates from Ashanti not to vote for Dr. Apraku, Osafo Maafo and Dan Botwe, three Ministers that he had dismissed. This meant that realistically speaking the only serious candidates for consideration were Vice President Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Nana Akuffo-Addo and Alan Kyerematen.<sup>307</sup>

University of Ghana, Legon became a beehive of activity where all the aspirants met and addressed delegates the last night to the congress. On Election Day 22 December 2007 when voting had ended, the National Electoral Commission Officer announced

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Communication; Jake Obetsebi-Lamptey, Tourism and Diasporan Relations; Alan Kyerematen, Trade, Industry and PSI, Felix Owusu-Adjapong, Majority Leader, Parliamentary Affairs and acting Road Transport Minister and Papa Owusu-Ankomah, Education, Science and Sports.

<sup>305</sup> Frempong, *Political Conflict and Elite Consensus in the Liberal State*, 157

<sup>306</sup> Adam, interview.

<sup>307</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 288



the results, the delegates, with Nana Akuffo-Addo in the lead with 1,096. Aliu, tipped to carry the day had placed third with 146 votes having been overtaken by Alan Kwadwo Kyerematen with 738, Yaw Osafo Marfo came with 63 votes, followed by Daniel Botwe with 52 votes. Papa Owusu Ankomah followed him with 34, Hackman Owusu Agyeman 28, Addo Kufuor with 22, Mike Ocquaye, 20 votes. The rest were; Obetsebi Lamptey with 20 votes, Kofi Konadu Apraku, 19 votes, Frimpong Boateng, 12 votes, Kwabena Agyarko, with 10 votes, Kenndey Owusu Agyapong, with 9 votes, Kennedy Agyapong, with 9 votes, Baffour Awuah, with 6 votes and Arthur Kennedy, with 1 vote. Alhaji Aliu Mahama accepted the result and congratulated Nana Akuffo-Addo.<sup>308</sup>

The prospects of Aliu Mahama were adversely affected by a number of handicaps. As argued by one writer, Aliu Mahama was a member of the Dagbomba ethnic group and, as such, an interested party in the disputes that had resulted in the murder of the Ya Na the overlord of Dagbon. This meant that he was bound to have a number of detractors, not only among the Dagbon but also among other groups who had taken sides in the dispute.<sup>309</sup> Another disabling factor was that in spite of the fact that Aliu was the incumbent vice president he could not easily count on widespread support within the NPP. It was clear that even after he became vice president, certain elements in the party still did not accept him as a card bearing member. The Old Boys considered him as a latter-day convert of the NPP who was brought to the position through the maneuverings of Kufuor. This was because Kufuor had chosen him as his running mate without consulting senior members of the party, and this had created resentment against Aliu with some of these members. This feeling was cited in many places.

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<sup>308</sup> *The Ghanaian Times*, 23 December 2007, p. 12

<sup>309</sup> Fordwor, *The Danquah-Busia Tradition*, 288

On 8 November 2007, the state own newspaper, The Ghanaian Times captured a story that Alhaji Aliu Mahama was not a card bearing member of the party. The paper described him as a newcomer who had not contributed to the party.<sup>310</sup> It was also recorded that the vetting committee for the presidential primaries postponed its sitting without the notice of Aliu Mahama. It was alleged that all the seventeen aspirants except Aliu, had received prior notifications of the postponement, which the committees attributed to technical reasons and when Aliu got to the venue of the session, the committee members were not present.<sup>311</sup> Right from the word go, therefore, Aliu had one disadvantage in the sense that he was not respected and accepted as a true patriot.

Though he lost, he retained his respect as a vice president and declared his total support for the party. “I am better ready to join hands to fight Election 2008.”<sup>312</sup> He was reported to have recommended Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, who was then the Deputy Governor of Bank of Ghana to Nana Addo as a running mate for elections 2008.<sup>313</sup> According to Bawumia, Aliu Mahama recommended him to Nana Addo. And “he told me I’m going to hold your hand and help you to become Vice President of this country.”<sup>314</sup>

The evidence so far adduced from the internal situation of the NPP revealed that there were divisions and ideological conflicts in the party as shown and these problems

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<sup>310</sup> *The Ghanaian Times*, 8 November 2007, p. 12

<sup>311</sup> Kennedy, *Chasing the Elephant*, 17

<sup>312</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 24 December 2007,

<sup>313</sup> Expectedly, there were strenuous objections to Dr. Bawumia’s nomination by some members of the Executive Committee of the party, including Ama Busia, Haruna Esseku, Dan Botwe, Papa Owusu Ankomah, Kwabena Agyapong and Arthur Kennedy on the grounds that Dr. Bawumia was not known in the party. On the other hand, Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Osafo Maafo, Mike Ocquaye, Bin Salia and Kufuor supported Bawunia’s nomination. Among them, Aliu Mahama was eloquent.

<sup>314</sup> Remarks by Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice President of Ghana, on the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passing of Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Accra, Cantonments, 16 November 2017.

partly caused the defeat of the party during the 2008 elections. Although an effort was made to resolve the internal differences, it was apparent that the NPP presented a spectacle of a party at war within itself as against the NDC which was more formidable and unity.<sup>315</sup> It was also clear that the shadow of the presidential primary had extended to affect the Parliamentary primaries. Soon there were reports of primary candidates identifying themselves as Nana Akuffo-Addo's or Alan Kyerematen's candidates. The result was that the NPP had an unprecedented number of independent candidates. Though a number of them won, they cost the party crucial support in many places and sent the NPP candidates down to defeat. Notable examples were Yendi and Salaga where the party lost seats.<sup>316</sup>

As it was expected, when the 2008 presidential elections results were declared, Nana Akuffo-Addo of the NPP polled 49.13 percent, the John Evans Atta Mills of NDC pulled 47.92 percent, Paa Kwesi Nduom of CPP pulled 1.34 percent, Edward Mahama of PNC got 0.87 percent, Emmanuel Ansah-Antwi of DFP got 0.33 percent, Thomas Ward Brew of DPP polled 0.10, Kwabena Adjei of RPD got 0.08 percent and Independent Kwasi Amofo polled 0.23. As a result of the inability of any party to secure a fifty percent plus one vote as required by the constitution, a round-off was held on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2008, and Mills beat Nana Addo 50.47 to 49.53 percent respectively.

On 7 January 2009, John Attah Mills, winner of the 2008 presidential elections was sworn in as president, bringing the Kufuor-Aliu Mahama led administration to an end. Simply attired in a traditional smock from Northern Ghana, Aliu arrived at the ceremonial grounds at the forecourt of Parliament House and waved to the crowd.

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<sup>315</sup> Frempong, interview.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 23

Even though he had no official duty to perform, Aliu comfortably observed proceedings and congratulated the newly sworn-in president and his Vice president.

One most important issue that generated public discussions was the question of whether or not Aliu Mahama will remain in politics or go back to his private sector businesses? The state-owned newspaper, *Daily Graphic* had earlier captured a headline “Aliu Mahama has given up on politics.” According to the paper, Aliu vowed never to return to politics. “I had 146 votes, as has been announced, but I did not expect that actually because I had done a lot of work and I think that did not reflect the run of play... I want to have my cool, go into private life. Eight years is enough for me. I want to return to business but to decide what business to enter.” Aliu said.<sup>317</sup>

Whilst busy performing his duty as vice president, his attention was drawn to these alleged remarks published in the newspapers. Some friends had personally contacted him to ascertain the truth. In response to this, Alhaji Aliu Mahama unequivocally denied that assertion and insisted that “politics is my life...I have never said that I am going to quit politics; clearly I have not said so. I have a very big constituency to look after and cannot let them down. I am a politician and would continue to do politics and work in the interest of the NPP.”<sup>318</sup>

The life he lived after he left office as a vice president will form the discussion of the next chapter. Attention is on his relationship with his family, businesses and party. His death and burial tributes are also presented.

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<sup>317</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 27 December 2007,

<sup>318</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 31 December 2007, pp. 1-3

## CHAPTER SIX

### POST-VICE PRESIDENTIAL LIFE 2009-2012

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter examines Aliu's life after active eight years of political service as a Vice-President. Discussions are centered on his relationship with his family, businesses and political party. The chapter also discussed Aliu's death, burial and how Ghanaians described him as well as his legacy.

After eight years in office as a Vice President, Aliu returned home on 7 January 2009 from the Parliament House where the newly elected president and his vice had been sworn into office to begin his post-vice-presidential life. He returned home as a proud father to his family and to the nation as a statesman. Interestingly, his mother, Hajia Mariama who was in her early ninety's was still strong in Tamale and was delighted to hear her Aliu's success in politics. According to Alhaji Zimbilla, Aliu Mahama's involvement in politics affected his regular visits to his family in the North because he was mostly in Accra. Therefore, when he successfully ended his constitutional mandate, he made it a point to always visit his family in Tamale and Yendi.<sup>319</sup> Arguably, since 2000, when Aliu was elected to serve as a Vice President, the family, though to some extent joyful with that political achievement, also started missing him as a son, father and brother.

Alhaji Aliu Mahama took a keen interest in his children's education. Alhaji Umar Farouk Aliu Mahama emphasized that their father encouraged them to take their studies seriously if they wanted to be successful in life.<sup>320</sup> At age 63, all his five

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<sup>319</sup> Interview with Alhaji Zibilla, 10 November 2018

<sup>320</sup> In my interview with Alhaji Umar Farouk Aliu Mahama, he told me that "I feel emotional when saying this, but my father used to tell me, I was never the son of a vice president. My mother used to sell Hausa koko in Yendi where we used to sit by the pot with a single school uniform for the whole week, but it never stopped me from achieving my dreams. You don't need to be born with the silver

children had completed University education with some working in various government institutions in Ghana and some in the United States.<sup>321</sup> Indeed, it would have raised eyebrows if Aliu Mahama had not paid attention to the education of his children, because this was a man who owed his achievements to education.

Within the larger Ghanaian community, Aliu was a statesman. He had a cordial relationship with the new government even though he belonged to a different political party. He was still invited to national programs. Within the NPP, he retained his respect as a party asset. He was involved in party meetings and decision-making process. His compound was also full of people from both public and private sector workers seeking ideas.<sup>322</sup>

At his age, Aliu was still energetic. His construction firm had been managed by his nephew Abdul Rahama. According to Abdulai, the firm dwindled in its performances due to poor management.<sup>323</sup> Therefore, when he left office as Vice-President, Aliu claimed back his managerial position and revamped the firm. Modern equipment was bought, contracts awarded were finished on time, discipline was ensured with personnel improving their skills in modern construction through seminars and workshops outside Tamale.<sup>324</sup>

Similarly, his favorite Real Tamale United Football Club which he was a founding member and a major shareholder was on the verge of being relegated from the Ghana Premier League as a result of poor management. Other lesser disciplines such as the

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spoon before you make it. Just believe in yourself and as my Old man use to say and Do the right thing."

<sup>321</sup> Alhaji Umar Farouk Aliu Mahama is the Deputy Procurement Officer of Ghana Cocoa Board, Hajia Aliu Salimatu, is a private businesswoman in Ghana, Aliu Mahama Mohammed, Fayard Aliu Mahama and Halim Aliu Mahama work in the United States of America.

<sup>322</sup> Interview with Mohammed Yakubu, Aliu Mahama's bodyguard, Accra, 27 November 2017.

<sup>323</sup> Indeed, very few works were done within the period of eight years that Aliu Mahama was a Vice President.

<sup>324</sup> Abdul Rahama, interview.

volleyball and basketball teams had been abandoned due to financial constraints.<sup>325</sup> To rekindle the spirit of the club, Alhaji Aliu Mahama donated a 70-seater bus and souvenirs to the club. Both management and players of the volleyball and the basketball teams were put under his payroll voucher. He also financed bills of the football teams anytime they travelled outside Tamale. The impact of these investments was that most of the volleyball and the basketball players were recruited into the national team.<sup>326</sup> However, the football team failed to wake-up from its slumber and eventually went into relegation in the 2009-2010 season after thirty-two years of effective participation. Aliu aimed to discover and nurture young talented Northerners as a way of reducing poverty and fostering unity.<sup>327</sup>

While in office as a Vice President, Aliu established a philanthropic organization which he called Aliu Mahama Foundation. The foundation was entrusted to some family members and when he left office as a Vice President, he took full responsibility as a managing director.

### **6.1 The Aliu Mahama Foundation**

The Aliu Mahama Foundation was a legally registered Non-Governmental Organization, formally called Life Care Foundation, founded on 10 April 2002 out of the passion of Alhaji Aliu Mahama to create a better world for underprivileged youth and deprived communities. Its core values were Discipline, Integrity, Excellence and Transparency (DIET). The Foundation was an independent, non-governmental, non-religious, non-tribal, non-partisan and non-profit organization established to shape lives and advance human dignity.<sup>328</sup> The organization, as part of its mission, was to

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<sup>325</sup> Interview with Mohammed Barko Alhassan, a sports presenter, Radio Savana Tamale, 21 November 2017.

<sup>326</sup> Remarks by Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice Present of Ghana, during the renaming of the Tamale Sports Stadium to Aliu Mahama Sports Stadium, 10 December 2017.

<sup>327</sup> *ibid*

<sup>328</sup> *ibid*

transform the lives of young and vibrant people by assisting them to access opportunities available to them to live a dignified life. It was to assist everybody, especially the under-privileged in society to live up to their full potential (in a conducive environment) in a quest to promote dignified and well-fulfilled lives.<sup>329</sup>

The Foundation focused on the campaign against indiscipline in all forms, promote the right access to education, advocacy for efficient delivery of quality health care and provision of education materials and logistics. Over the years, the Foundation has focused on humanitarian work by providing material and logistical assistance to the vulnerable in deprived communities. It was also very committed to providing healthcare to residents of deprived communities. Again, the Foundation provided support for formal and informal education, food security for the nation by empowering local farmers and climate change. All these were under the theme 'Campaign for Greater Discipline.'<sup>330</sup>

As a more crusader, Aliu Mahama concerned himself with insisting on freedom from the shackles of poverty through the power of education. He empowered young people through his Foundation to broaden their horizons and exposed them to limitless opportunities through education. He instituted a scholarship scheme to assist individuals to get financial and logistical assistance to complete their education. Between 2001- 2012, about eighty (80) students made up of basic, secondary and tertiary levels benefited from this scheme.<sup>331</sup>

On health, the Foundation in partnership with the University of Louisville Eye Centre and the Tamale-Louisville Sister City education and cultural programme instituted an annual exchange programme between the two cities. Bridge Kids NGO in Louisville

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<sup>329</sup> *ibid*

<sup>330</sup> Aliu Mahama Foundation brochure, p. 5

<sup>331</sup> *ibid*



in partnership with Aliu Mahama Foundation also provided a facility to annually exchange programmes for student volunteers from Louisville University to Ghana for volunteerism. In the area of agriculture, several farmers in selected districts were given agricultural implements and capacity enhancement in modern farming practices to help improve their yield and increase the food basket of the nation. Small-scale farmers from Pru, Jirapa and Bawku among others benefitted from this programme.<sup>332</sup>

## **6.2 Politics is my Life**

It would be recalled that after the NPP presidential congress in Legon, which saw a humiliating defeat for Alhaji Aliu Mahama, he said in an interview with the state-owned media house, the Daily Graphic that "politics is my life."<sup>333</sup> Many thought he was going to contest for his party's presidential candidate again. However, he meant that he was going to throw all efforts behind the NPP to recapture power from the NDC.<sup>334</sup>

Ahead of elections 2012, the NPP renewed the mandate of Nana Addo and Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia as the presidential candidate and the running mate respectively. Aliu was instrumental in the drafting of the 2012 NPP manifesto. He suggested the establishment of a Zongo Development Fund Bill to accelerate developmental projects in the Zongo.<sup>335</sup> In the actual campaigning, he moved with his apprentice, Dr. Mahamadu Bawumia. Speaking at every rally and travelling almost everywhere.<sup>336</sup> According to Bawumia, there were times Aliu Mahama, out of tiredness would even doze off while sitting at rallies but still would be energized to speak eloquently.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> *ibid*

<sup>333</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 31 December 2007, pp. 1-3

<sup>334</sup> Frempong, interview.

<sup>335</sup> Speech delivered by Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, during the 5<sup>th</sup> Aliu Mahama Memorial prayers, Accra, 16 November 2017

<sup>336</sup> *ibid*

<sup>337</sup> Dr. Bawumia's speech, 16 November 2017

According to Samuel Frimpong, it was during this campaign process that Alhaji Aliu Mahama took ill. It was alleged that some officials within the campaign team, including Bawumia, expressed concern about his health but Aliu would not listen.<sup>338</sup> He eventually collapsed on a campaign platform at Sunyani in the Brong-Ahafo region. After several days on admission at the Sunyani regional hospital, Aliu was transferred to the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra. According to Frimpong, Aliu Mahama even on his sickbed still asked of campaign progress. He was diagnosed with a heart attack and eventually died on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2012.<sup>339</sup> One can therefore conclude that, truly, politics was Alhaji Aliu Mahama's life. He said it and stood by his words.<sup>340</sup>

### **6.3 The Death and Burial of Alhaji Aliu Mahama**

Alhaji Aliu Mahama died on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at the age of 66. The death of Alhaji Aliu Mahama came barely four months after the death of President Mills, which plunged the nation into a state of shock and grief. It was a double tragedy. It was the first and only time in Ghana's history that the nation suffered the loss of two distinguished statesmen in just one year.<sup>341</sup> News of Aliu's death brought to a halt all political activities across the country, especially in Yendi where he hailed and Tamale where he schooled and lived for many years. On the political scene, the presidential

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<sup>338</sup> Interview with Frempong

<sup>339</sup> *ibid*

<sup>340</sup> It was therefore not surprising that Nana Addo in paying tribute to Alhaji Aliu Mahama acknowledged his invaluable role in his campaign. He said "it was, in fact, a reflection of the man that he embraced with such evident sincerity the ambitions of his successor as the NPP's vice presidential candidate, Mahamudu Bawumia, to whom he became an invaluable mentor and guardian. I daresay that the relative success of our campaign in his home region of the North, which saw the number of our parliamentary seats go from 3 in 2008 to 10 in 2012, was in no small measure due to his active involvement in that campaign."

<sup>341</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 19 November 2012

candidates had suspended their campaign tours across the country, even at the crucial moments towards the December 7 polls.<sup>342</sup>

After his death, Ghanaians of various persuasions paid tributes to him. Nana Akufo-Addo described Aliu as a proud Dagomba who personified the best traits of the Ghanaian character- patriotic, responsible and tolerant.<sup>343</sup> Other personalities referred to him as a disciplinarian and a hardworking leader. Haruna Iddrisu, a former Minister of Communication Minister under John Mahama, described him as “a very upright and honest man.”<sup>344</sup> It is indeed unnecessary to quote from them at all, for it was enough to say that they were tributes to a good statesman.

The public discourse after his death was a reflection of Aliu’s contributions in public service and what they told of his private life. For most of those born after 2012, such knowledge does not extend much beyond who Alhaji Aliu Mahama was and the oversimplified description that ‘he was a contractor who became a politician.’ On the other hand, among the older ones, who had personal experiences with Aliu and in-depth understanding of the period he lived and served, strong views were held, for him as a man who played a key role in consolidating Ghana’s democracy. He was admired as a good and an astute administrator whose general composure, demeanour and public speaking had brought some respect, nobility and dignity to the office of the Vice President. Aliu’s limitations, however, lay in popular appeal: “The Vice President is dull and not an exciting politician. He sticks to his prepared speech and

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<sup>342</sup> Nana Addo had suspended his campaign in the Eastern Region until further notice and returned to Accra to commiserate with the family of Aliu. The party also directed the suspension of all campaign activities, from the national to all constituency level, until after the burial of Alhaji Aliu Mahama. Mr. John Dramani Mahama of the NDC also suspended his campaign. Dr. Henry Lartey, Presidential Candidate of the Great Consolidated Popular Party (GCPP) also suspended its campaign and directed all members to participate fully in the funeral arrangement for Alhaji Aliu Mahama. For further details of parties who suspended their campaign tours, see Daily Graphic 17 November 2012, Ghanaian Time 17 November 2012 and [www.ghananewsagency.org](http://www.ghananewsagency.org) 17 November 2012.

<sup>343</sup> Second Aliu Mahama Memorial Lecture, 10 December 2014.

<sup>344</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 19 November 2012, p 3

on the rare occasions he does digress, he does not go to town.”<sup>345</sup> What is not in dispute is the disciplinary status that he occupies which was admired even among those who held negative views about him.

Alhaji Aliu Mahama produced the new ideology of discipline and implemented it. It was therefore not surprising that despite their political differences, the then President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama, described Aliu as a tactful and discerning politician with a sense of discipline who served Ghana with distinction to support democracy and development in the country.<sup>346</sup> It was a tribute that reflects a trait of a leader who exhibited discipline, patriotism and unswerving devotion to duty. A complete legacy left on friends and foes in Ghanaian politics. Perhaps, it was against this background that he was honoured a state burial.

Having been a wealthy businessman before he became a Vice President, it was easy for him to relate to the needs and problems of people particularly the youth. In my interaction with Hajia Ramatu Aliu, she revealed that Aliu was a generous man who supported the education of the youth through sponsorship and was always ready to offer support to his friends. Though Aliu is dead and gone, he is still eulogized by politicians in their meeting with his family. According to Hajia Ramatu, modern politicians like Mr. Haruna Iddirisu, the member of parliament for Tamale South and current Minority Leader in Parliament and other high profile politicians continue to visit her and eulogized Aliu Mahama for his great service and dedication to the people of Ghana and the unflinching support in nurturing some young talents in the North.<sup>347</sup> Regardless of whatever the motives for their visits are, the bottom line is that these

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<sup>345</sup> Frempong, interview, 21 August 2020.

<sup>346</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 19 November 2012, p. 3

<sup>347</sup> Interview with Hajia Ramatu Aliu, wife of Aliu Mahama at his Cantonment residence in Accra, 15 November 2019.

visits are pointers to the recognition of Aliu Mahama as far as Ghana's development is concerned.

His disdain for indiscipline was so strong. He directed all to shun ostentatious lifestyles and to lead very clean lives. He left a pattern of the kind of leader who lived his entire life as a moral crusader and his inclination for social justice. He was not a show boy. His happy moment was when he watched football or play badminton. Interestingly, the appeal by well-meaning Ghanaians to rename the Tamale Sports Stadium after Aliu Mahama was materialized in 2017.<sup>348</sup> A decision that reflects the role of a leader who contributed to the development of sports in the region. It is perhaps the greatest of all tributes to him.

As a member of the Dagbon Royal Family, Aliu influenced the Northern liberation struggle against ethnic and chieftaincy violence. Beyond representing a symbol of peaceful collective action for change and development, he was on record actively involved in resolving many conflicts that rocked the North. He initiated many fora for the mediation of issues on conflicts that remain an inspiration. It was therefore not surprising that the family appealed to the government to bury Aliu Mahama at his private residence in Tamale in accordance with the customs and traditions of Dagbon. According to Alhaji Abdul-Rahama, the burial in Tamale was necessary, since Aliu Mahama was from a Royal Family in Dagbon and his mother was still alive, 'it was only proper that he was returned home.'<sup>349</sup> On the 19 of November 2012, Aliu was buried at his Kalpohin residence at Tamale

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<sup>348</sup> *ibid*

<sup>349</sup> Abdul Rahama, interview.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The study examined the life and times of Alhaji Aliu Mahama - an engineer, entrepreneur, politician and statesman in the framework of historical biographical analysis from March 1946 to November 2012. The study explored the social, economic and political conditions of his early life in the 1940s and early 1950s and how these conditions shaped his life.

The thesis revealed Aliu's life embodied the struggle of a young man who succeeded in life through hard work and will power. He rose from a humble beginning and achieved high academic laurels due to his outstanding intellectual prowess coupled with hard work and sheer determination. He self-financed his education from the 1960s with his tax collector's money. Aliu achieved considerable academic successes, obtaining a BSc in Building Technology from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi and two certificates in Project Planning and Management in Leadership from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) Accra in 1971 and 1980 respectively.

The thesis established that Aliu started his working career at the Bolgatanga Regional Office of the State Construction Corporation as an Engineer from 1972-1975. Through determination and hard work, Aliu rose rapidly through the managerial ranks above his folks to serve as the Assistant Regional Manager of the State Construction Corporation at the Koforidua Regional Office from 1975-1976 and later served as the Regional Manager in charge of the Corporation in the Northern Region from June 1976-August 1982.

The thesis has further revealed that between 1982 and 2000, an era when only very brave individuals could associate with competitive businesses, Aliu took the risk to

venture into the private sector as a private contractor and made a success. He successfully established his own Civil Engineering and General Construction Firm- Lidra Limited and became its Managing Director. Indeed, many roads, health centres, dams and school buildings constructed between the periods of 1980s to 2000 in the Northern, Eastern and Brong Ahafo-Regions own their root, refurbishment to the activities of Lidra.

The thesis also revealed that Aliu was not a novice in social and political leadership. Alhaji Aliu Mahama's gradual strides into the national limelight began with his election to serve in the Eastern Dagbomba District Council in 1978. He was also a founding member of the Real Tamale United Football Club in 1978, which he later chaired as Chairman of the Board of Directors from 1991 to 2000. He was also a member of the Tamale Municipal Assembly of 1990 and chairman of the Economic Development Sub-Committee of the Tamale Louisville Sister State Committee in 1993. He served as first Vice President of the Dagomba Youth Association in 1994 and had the rare distinction of the recognition of his professional peers when he was elected Chairman of the Northern Regional Contractors Association from 1996 to 2000.

One most important observation that came out from this study was that Aliu's rise to the second-highest office in the country was more of a coincidence than by design. Aliu was not initially known by the Ghanaian public as an active member of the New Patriotic Party, the offshoot of the Danquah Busia-Dombo political tradition. He was relatively unknown in high-profile Ghanaian politics and this was due largely to his professional upbringing. Hence, his selection by Kufuor as a running mate surprised many. Aliu's rise to serve as a running mate and later Ghana's longest-serving Vice

President was by and large the result of the manoeuvrings of J. A. Kufuor, after various attempts to woo Edward Mahama of the PNC to partner him had failed.

This thesis revealed that Aliu assumed the mantle of leadership as a Vice President during one of the most critical periods of Ghana's political history. Aliu's contribution to political developments in Ghana can be examined from his ability to uphold the constitution, the economic and social policies he initiated to redirect the attitude of Ghanaians. The input of Alhaji Aliu Mahama in propelling Ghana from a low-income country to middle income was historically recorded. His stewardship as the chairman of the Economic Management Committee witnessed the most dramatic transformation in the history of the Fourth Republic.

The study also showed that Aliu was an exemplar of what a Vice President should be—supportive, encouraging and constantly watching out for pitfalls. He was open, honest and forthright. He radiated a sense of humility and managed to unite people around him. He brought a sense of dedication, intensity and discipline to all he did, whether supervising a football team or serving his community as a leader. Indeed, his ‘War against Indiscipline’, an attitudinal change advocacy platform founded by him as Vice President to promote discipline in national life, will forever be remembered for its innovative methods of public advocacy.

The study again revealed that the most disturbing incident during Aliu’s tenure as Vice President was the tragic death of his good friend, the Ya-Na, Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II, an event which brought the credibility of the government into question. It shocked him to his core, and he worked tirelessly to find a solution to the problems of peace and reconciliation for his beloved Dagbon.

In spite of the doubts and criticisms that have been raised against Aliu, he aroused in Ghanaians the principles of hard work, dignity, and honesty. We should celebrate the



life and achievement of this great national icon of peace, harmony and respect for humanity. Indeed, our national values – growing our people, delivering the Ghanaian interest, advancing the public good, constantly raising the bar of industry, respecting each other and upholding the highest level of integrity – find expression in the legacy of this towering figure who believed in making a difference than living a mere life.

History will remember him as a certified engineer, successful sports administrator, accomplished contractor and a successful politician. Again, history will remember Aliu as the first northerner, first Moslem and the longest-serving Vice President who brought a sense of dedication, intensity and discipline to the office of the Vice President. No doubt, this thesis has shed more light on the knowledge on the life story, works, achievements and failures of Alhaji Aliu Mahama, an icon of the north and illustrious son of Ghana.

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