

Ekumfi Ethnic Clashes May Be More Economic Than Political

By Kwame Okoampa-Ahoofe, Jr., Ph.D.- By Ghana Web

It is very tempting to politicize the recent interethnic clashes between the Fante and the Ewe in the Central Region's township of Ekumfi-Narkwah, in which a local farmer and sub-chieftain was decapitated (See "Tribal Clashes in Central Region: 2 Shot Dead, 1 Beheaded" Ghanaweb.com 6/7/12). As the parenthetical caption indicates, at least two people lost their lives by gunshot wounds. And at the time of this writing (6/8/12), a third person was reported to have succumbed to his gunshot wounds, with four others in critical condition from gunshot wounds on admission at local health centers.

Yes, it is rather tempting to facilely politicize the Ekumfi-Narkwah interethnic hostilities because it is smack-dab within the vicinity of the home- village of President John Evans Atta-Mills, near the Saltpond municipality of the Central Region. But even more significantly, this fit of mayhem comes on the heels of the very angry call by the New Patriotic Party's Member of Parliament for Assin-North, for besieged Akans to meet force with countervailing force in the lead-up to Election 2012, and the widely reported acts of violence and intimidation by some hired members of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) against some members, supporters and sympathizers of the main opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) during the recently ended biometric registration exercise. And already, predictably, Ms. Ama Benyiwa Doe, the Central Regional Minister, has cynically accused Mr. Kennedy Ohene Agyepong for having instigated the Fante-Ewe clashes.

The preceding notwithstanding, too many puzzles appear to be missing from the bloody chessboard of the Ekumfi-Narkwah, Fante-Ewe hostilities for any levelheaded citizen and/or observer to be able to draw any meaningful conclusions from this veritable act of tragic criminality. For instance, not much has been revealed by the media vis-à-vis the relationship between the Ewe "immigrant" community of the Ekumfi-Narkwah township and its local Fante hosts. Non-natives also have no meaningful and relevant idea of why Ebusuapanyin Nana Eguase, a local clan head got killed, beheaded and half-buried on his own coconut farm. The some of the Fante natives in the Ekumfi-Narkwah township apparently believe that it was an Ewe, or a group of immigrant Ewes, that murdered the local community leader even though, thus far, no arrests have been effected by the local police. And so, at best, the widespread suspicion of the Ewe community being implicated in the brutal murder of Ebusuapanyin Nana Eguase remains essentially speculative.

The inescapable political dimension here, of course, is quite obvious; and it can hardly be gainsaid that it may well be a part of the fallout from the publicly and palpably frozen relationship between President John Evans Atta-Mills and the half-Ewe former Ghanaian strongman and former president who adamantly imposed the former University of Ghana tax-law professor on the membership of the now-ruling National Democratic Congress, and the Ghanaian electorate at large.

And on the latter score ought to be promptly recalled the fact that sometime early this year or late last year, a bitterly disaffected and estranged Mr. Rawlings invidiously appealed to citizens and residents of his native Volta Region not to vote for his former arch-lieutenant in a rhetorical tenor that many critics deemed to be politically divisive and morally reprehensible. President Mills' faction of NDC supporters would shortly retaliate, by summarily preventing Mr. Rawlings' wife and longtime Ghanaian first lady, Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, from addressing her supporters at the Cape Coast Town Hall.

What made matters rather appalling was the fact that the Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings-for-President campaign organization had prepaid for the use of the Cape Coast Town Hall to address some of the staunch backers of her failed bid to both punitively dislodging the incumbent and clinching the NDC

presidential-nomination ticket in a program mischievously billed as part of a nationwide “Thank You” tour. For, it clearly appears that in flagrantly turning her away from the publicly-owned and operated Cape Coast Town Hall, the Mills-Mahama faction of NDC supporters hoped to check the former first lady’s running stentorian tirade against the government of the man whom her husband handpicked from relative obscurity and cynically and mischievously groomed, some critics say, for a grossly oversized job.

It is also rather peevisly amusing to hear some conspiracy theorists cynically insist on the wicked fingers of key operatives of the main opposition New Patriotic Party being smack behind the proverbial details of the Ekumfi-Narkwah, Fante-Ewe hostilities. Peevisly amusing because as the ruling government, the Mills-led National Democratic Congress could have acted in a diligent and timely fashion to stanch the Ekumfi-Narkwah hostilities long before it flared and exploded into the national tragic embarrassment that it clearly has become. But, of course, this hand-soiling approach to grassroots leadership is not sexy enough for rabble-rousing political hacks like Ms. Ama Benyiwa Doe, the Central Regional Minister, who prefers to cheaply lob night-soil at her political rivals and opponents than govern maturely and civilly.

Needless to say, it is almost certain that tensions between the Ewe immigrant community and its Fante hosts have been simmering for some time now. It is also quite certain that it was the natural search for economic comfort and peace that brought the Ewe residents of Ekumfi-Narkwah to their present abode. Likewise, it is also naturally to be expected that a remarkable level of intermarriages has “naturalized” these former Ewe immigrants well enough to warrant their being regarded as equally native to the area and the region, in general. In sum, more credibly, acute leadership lethargy may well be the culprit at Ekumfi-Narkwah. Whatever be the case, justice ought not to be denied those deserving of the same.

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