TAMALE NDC AND NPP CLASHES FROM 1992-2002: A CHALLENGE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN GHANA?

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ABSTRACT

Ghana that has often been described as an island of peace within the West African sub-region contains some pockets of violence which includes Tamale; a Metropolis in the northern part of the country. The end of the cold war in 1991 witnessed democratic reforms in many African countries then under military dictatorship. Ghana re-democratized in 1992 with numerous inter-party clashes between the two main political parties in Ghana; the NDC and the NPP which in-turn impacted negatively on good governance in the country. With the youth activists of both political parties engaging each other in street clashes, it violated fundamental human rights of citizens who fell victims to these violence while at the same time, scarce resources were dissipated in the search for peace. The paper sets out to validate the proposition that the violence is often sponsored by certain individual citizens to satisfy their parochial political interests in the region.

Keywords: Re-democratization, cold war, contagion, and good governance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ghana which has been described as an island of peace in the West Africa sub-region transited to democratic governance 1992 after eleven years of military dictatorship with two main political parties; the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) becoming the defacto political parties in the country. Though, Ghana is fortunate to have been spared of the African conflict contagion except for a few pockets of the violence centred mostly on chieftaincy/land related issues. It is the view of most analysts that if these issues are not resolved it could truncate the modest gains that the country has made since redemocratization in 1992. The aim of this paper is to look into the causes of the conflicts which always manifest in the clashes witnessed between the ruling NDC and the main opposition party, the NPP in Tamale Metropolis. It is also to consider what generally contributes to the lawlessness or the "culture of

impunity" in the Tamale Metropolis of lately and how the situation impacts on the quest to attain good governance in the Northern region of Ghana in general.

Political tensions exist between the ruling NDC government and the main opposition NPP everywhere in Ghana, but no place has seen violent clashes like that of Tamale. Though Ghana does not experience conflicts of national proportions, this paper sees the potential in the localized inter/intra-ethnic or inter-party clashes as experienced in Tamale between supporters of the NDC and the NPP leading to such a large scale conflict if not checked. Other ethnic groups can copy the example of the Tamale clashes.

1.1 The African Conflicts

In the closing decades of the twentieth century, the absence of democratic governance in Africa slowed down the development of the continent. Aidoo (2006)[1] writes that political scientists and Africa's development partners proposed democratization and good governance as a way out of the continent's underdevelopment.

Considering the deteriorating nature of the economies of African countries that had undergone decades of structural adjustment programmes prescribed for them by the Breton-Woods institutions of the IMF/World Bank, bad governance was identified for being responsible for their ailing economies. Thus, by the end of the 1980s therefore, the 'good governance' agenda caught on well with the western donor institutions (bilateral and multi-lateral) and other foreign NGOs which all made the concept of good governance their key objective in the Third World countries of which Ghana is included. As a result, the Rawlings administration from the beginning of the 1990s came under intense pressure to open the political space for political participation (Aidoo, 2006).

The demise of the cold war in the early 1990s also played a significant part in the democratization storm which swept across Africa including Ghana. Ninsin (1998)[2] asserts that the prodemocracy movement across the world which characterized the post-cold war era had greatly influenced Africa. The demand for political participation by politically marginalized groups brought about many intra-state conflicts in Africa. This had been both general political conflicts and political party related violence. The latter is the focus of this project.

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[1] Aidoo, T. M., 2006. "The Context and Provenance of Democratization in Ghana, 1990-1992". <u>Historia Actual Online</u>, no. 9 (1696-2060): 7-16

[2] Ninsin, K. A., 1998. "Introduction", in K.A. Ninsin, Ed., <u>Ghana: Transition to Democracy</u>. Accra: Freedom Publications.

Since the end of the Second War in 1945, intra-state (civil) conflicts have been the most common forms of armed conflict in the world. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 foreshadowed later events, leading to other intra-state wars (Copenhagen Consensus Paper, 2008)[3]. Today, there are new numerous small wars usually in the form of intra-state conflicts fought between combatants along religious, ethnic, or partisan lines, especially in the Third World.

The African continent has not been spared of these conflicts, right from the struggle against colonial domination to the post-independence era. For over four decades today, the African continent is beset with numerous incidence of violence emanating from conflicts; from the struggle against colonial domination to election related violence. In Africa, politically motivated violence is the greatest challenge to the quest for good governance in the continent's march toward the western model of democracy. Violence is prevalent on the African continent; in Somalia, Rwanda, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, northern Ghana, just to mention a few.

Numerous incidence of political violence emanating from political instability have been recorded for the past 46 years of the attainment of political independence; that is, from 1956 to 2001. These include coups d'état, attempted coups, and reported coups d'état in almost 50 independent sub-Saharan African States within that period (McGowan, 2003:1)[4]. From the West to the East, North to the South, the African continent seems to be deeply enmeshed in a contagion of political, ethnic, religious and resource generated conflicts. These undoubtedly constitute an affront to the quest for good governance since the attainment of political independence from the early 1960s. A chunk of the already impoverished strife-torn sub-Saharan African countries' resources are dispensed in the needless conflicts.

Tracing the historical antecedents of violence in the governance process in Africa, Hutchful (2001:3)[5] asserts that violence has been a permanent aspect of African history. It featured prominently in the construction of great African empires such as Ghana, Mali and Songhai, and the mobilization of labour for the construction of great monuments such as the pyramids of Egypt and the structures of the Great Zimbabwe. He adds that violence was used to extract tributes and to control trade routes as well as secure the supply of slaves.

Even though a variety of reasons can be ascribed for the political turbulence in West Africa, the absence of good governance is an important factor. This has in its wake created the enabling environment for unscrupulous arms dealers to flood the West African sub-region with light

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[3]Copenhagen Consensus Challenge Paper, April 2008, p. 5.

[4] McGowan, Patrick J., 2003. "African Military Coups d'Etats, 1956- 2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution", in the Journal of Modern African Studies, 41(3): 339-370

[5] Hutchful, E., 2001. "Security, Law and Order", in Africa Development, vol. XXXVI, no.1 & 2.

weapons and small arms. The relative ease with which small arms can be procured makes the settlement of disputes difficult. Embittered folks are easily attracted to the "power" they can arrogate to themselves upon acquiring some fire-power. This gives rise to the violent settlement of scores which is contagious as violence begets violence. Leff (2008:10)[6] asserts that insecurity intensifies by the prevalence of small arms and ex-combatants that possess them can have a negative effect on the economic and social conditions of countries coming out of conflicts. This is because of the surge of ex-combatants entering the highly competitive job market with no skills and the social networks that will enable them create sustainable livelihoods. This may compel them to go into a life of criminality or settlement of scores through banditry activities.

Citing Sorensen, Adejumobi (2000:3)[7] says the demand for participation in the decision-making process and involvement in choosing their leaders which serves as the bedrock of democracy is not a new phenomenon in Africa. This was the reason behind the struggle against colonial rule in Africa, so that, the present democracy movement in Africa could not be termed a process of "democratic birth". Richard Joseph (1990) calls this a process of "democratic renewal", in Adejumobi 2000 (ibid)." In spite of the fact that the strive for good governance is implicit in the process of the democratic renewal, the conception and usage of the term "good governance" in contemporary times emanated from the World Bank (Adejumobi, 2000). The World Bank (1989:60) in Ayee (1998)[8] defines good governance as the "exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs." It also identifies political accountability, freedom of association and participation, a fair and reliable judicial system, bureaucratic accountability, freedom of information and expression, and an effective and efficient public sector management as the most important aspects of good governance.

Linking good governance to democracy, Ayee (1998:4) is of the opinion that, the latter has the ingredients and features as well as the building blocks of the former. He concedes that both concepts are intertwined as their features reinforce each other. Thus, a synergy of the two concepts has now led to the coinage of the term "democratic good governance." However, Adejumobi (2000:6) takes a different view when he states that

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[6] Leff, J., 2008. "the Nexus between Social Capital and Reintegration of Ex-combatants: the Case for Sierra Leone", in Jakes Gerwel, Jannie Malan, and Tor Sellstrom, (Eds.), <u>African Journal of Conflict Resolution</u>, vol. 8, no. 1, ACCORD ISSN 1562-6997

[7] Adejumobi, S., 2000. "Africa and the Challenge of Democracy and Good Governance in the 21st Century", Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

[8] Ayee, J., 1998. <u>Assessing the Progress of Democracy and Good Governance in Africa</u>: the Ghanaian Case. Ghana. pp. 4-6.

> "While democracy is unquestionably good in itself and may augment good governance especially with respect to the civil and political liberties it guarantees, however, it does not add up to nor is it organically linked with good governance".

Ghana has received a lot of commendation within the West African sub-region for her stable democracy. Ghana though, peaceful in a turbulent sub-Saharan Africa region, has its own trouble spots. Notwithstanding the fact that Ghana has taken quite considerable strides towards democratic consolidation in recent years, with the peaceful changes of governments, she undoubtedly has challenges. The current democratic dispensation has led to numerous local tensions over land resources and chieftaincy.[9] Inter-party clashes in Ghana is not a new phenomenon as it dates back to the anti-colonial struggles for independence in the 1950s; between the elements of UGCC/NLM/UP[10] (Busia-Danquah) and those of the CPP (Nkrumah). Although, the prospect for the new generation of Nkrumaists to compete with the Danquah-Busiast tradition today has weakened the hitherto competitive tensions between them, the present political rivalry now is between the Rawlings' NDC and the Danquah-Busiast NPP which is reminiscent of the earlier post-independence environment. For instance, on June 10th, 2008, about 50 people were arrested after resurgence of violence in the morning between NDC and NPP youth groups in a night club in Tamale on June 7th, 2008. This took a political dimension when one of the groups involved identified others purported to have orchestrated the attacks on him as members of the NPP. Again, sporadic gunshots and stone throwing were reported in Tamale between August 31st and September 1st, 2008, when Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, the NPP vice Presidential aspirant was addressing supporters of his party at the Jubilee Park[11]. Reports abound in the Ghanaian newspapers about violence and tension between the two most dominant political parties; the NDC and the NPP. In Asutuare in 2001, the NPP and the NDC clashed injuring 30 persons. Political differences were reported to have worsened the conflicts emanating from chieftaincy and irrigated lands distribution disputes. Before this, the Ghanaian Times of 3rd January 2001 reported on the Bawku conflict.

Still on Ghana's fragile democracy and the spate of violence in the North, Bombande (2007:196) opines that, though Ghana today is described as one of the most stable countries politically and economically in West Africa, she still has also, fratricidal inter- and intra-ethnic competition. This competition according to him is responsible for the conflicts that sporadically boil over into violence and destruction at communal levels. Bombande concedes that, although conflicts over

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[9] The Commonwealth Ministers Reference Book, 2005

[10] UGCC stands for the United Gold Coast Convention, NLM stands for National Liberation Movement and UP is for United Party

[11] WANEP Warn Policy Brief, November 2008.

chieftaincy and land are widespread throughout Ghana, the most violent ones occur in the North; mentioning in particular the 1994-1995 ethnic conflict between the Konkombas [and their allies the Nawuris, Nchumurus and Basares] on the one hand, against the Dagombas, the Nanumbas and the Gonjas on the other, and also the Yendi crises which led to the death of the overlord of Dagbon, Ya Naa Yakubu Andani II and 30 others of his households on the March 27th, 2002. Bombande asserts that certain competing worldviews and the meaning of events develop into latent conflicts which only need a spark to ignite the flames. Citing in particular the December 31st, 1981 Revolution by Jerry Rawlings in Ghana, he says it was a major event in Ghana's history which instilled in the non-centralized peoples of the North the revolutionary fervour of the values of social justice, equity and accountability. This according to him stimulated the anger and resentment that some of the non- centralized ethnic groups held against the centralized ethnic groups in the north. In order to assert their collective influence and recognition, these people resort to armed conflicts.

2. THE TAMALE PROBLEM

The Tamale Metropolis has lately been engulfed in inter-party violence between the ruling National Democratic Party (NDC), and the main opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The Tamale Metropolis (then a Municipality) entered the 1992 Presidential and Parliamentary elections with only two electoral constituencies. In 2004, another constituency was carved out of the existing two. In the December 2008 general elections, the three constituencies were still maintained as Tamale North, Central and South Constituencies respectively. Unfortunately however, unlike the early 1990s the Tamale Metropolis has become a political 'hot-bed' for the two main political parties; with the youth activists of both political parties engaging each other in open street confrontations. This often results in fatalities and destruction of property. Shortly after the December 2004 elections in Ghana, the Northern Regional CPP chairman was picked from police custody by the military in Tamale and tortured to death. In a collaborative report on election violence in 2004 by CDD-Ghana and a Tamale-based Institute for Policy Alternatives (IPA), it was observed that "…The detention and subsequent death of Alhaji Issa Mobila in military custody caused a war-explosive situation in Tamale and its environs… But for the security measures instituted in the Tamale metropolis, the town would have been plunged in chaos"[12].

Recently, there has been an escalation of the violence due to the militarization of the youth activists. This has even crossed boundaries to other regions such as the Greater Accra Region where we have migrant Dagombas residing. The Ghanaian Times reports of violent clashes

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[12] Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) Project Ghana p.6

between NDC and NPP youths leading to the death of four persons at Agbogbloshie in Old Fadama in the Greater Accra Region in August 2009[13]. This follows an earlier one in the heat of the December 2008 elections. As a result of political patronage, there is now a growing culture of lawlessness in the metropolis. At the onset of our current democratic dispensation, adherents of the various political traditions indulged in the use of abusive language across the political divide. But after more than 23 years of the Fourth Republic, one would have expected the populace to imbibe the democratic culture of tolerance of opposing views, and also, the use of the due process to settle personal scores or political differences. Instead, we see the populace resort to 'vigilantism' and 'mob justice'. The case of the Tamale Metropolis is getting worse over the years. These developments often lead to some resentment of democratic governance especially among the predominantly aged illiterate population.

3. METHODOLOGY

Data for this study was obtained from the field through the use of qualitative method. I combined various data collection methods such as structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to solicit the views of respondents and also evaluate the data sources for inconsistent answers.

Structured questionnaires were administered to 30 respondents within the three constituencies of Tamale to represent 362,554 people (projected from the 2000 figure of 293,881with 3.5% growth rate) aged between 15 to above 45 years. The sample included both males and females. This method was very successful as respondents were interviewed within a short span of time. That notwithstanding, some respondents did not feel comfortable answering questions revolving around the inter-party clashes between the NDC and the NPP in Tamale. These people were assured of the treatment of their responses in the strictest confidentiality and this encouraged found them responding to the questionnaires.

In-depth interviews were conducted with an official of the Tamale Metropolis, the Police, some party executives, chiefs and opinion leaders to sample their views on the effects of inter-party clashes on the general development of Tamale. Several efforts to obtain quantitative data to corroborate my qualitative findings from both the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly and the Police were not successful. This was the reason behind my choice of the qualitative instead of quantitative method or both for this study.

Focus group discussion was the third method employed for this study. A total of two focus group discussions were conducted, with membership of the discussants coming from the three

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[13] Ghanaian Times, Thursday August 27th, 2009.

constituencies of the metropolis to solicit their views regarding the root causes and the effects of the inter-party clashes on good governance in Tamale. The membership was comprised of members from the NDC, NPP, and those who considered themselves to be swing voters. The discussion groups each had male dominance with only three females to bring their perspective as regards the effects of the clashes on their daily lives. The reason behind this male dominance is not far-fetched as the males are mostly the perpetrators of the clashes in Tamale. I considered the possibility of soliciting the views from insiders to the problem.

3.1. Sampling Techniques

A combination of sampling techniques was used to get to the respondents for the data collection. A purposeful sampling was used to get key informants such as the political party executives of the NDC and the NPP, the Police, the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly officials, traditional as well as some opinion leaders in Tamale.

The purpose for combining all the various research methods and sampling techniques was to gain first hand information on the root causes of the inter-party clashes and their effects on the governance process vis-à-vis the provision of essential social amenities by the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly as well as the promotion of human rights in the area. In this project both primary and secondary data have been used; primary data from structured questionnaire, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and secondary data from books and periodicals like academic journals and magazines including newspapers. Many of these academic journals were sourced through the electronic media (internet). Though the text method is used in this study, I employed the use of tables and pictures to give a vivid analysis of the data from the field.

The course of the study was guided throughout by ethics of informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. This was aimed at allaying the fears of informants as regards victimization emanating from their responses and to engender mutual trust and confidence on the part of my respondents.

4. CAUSES OF THE DAGBON CRISES

The conflict in Dagbon revolves around succession to the Dagbon paramountcy. According to Tsikata and Seini (2004, ibid), the alternating royal factions originates in the late nineteenth century, after the death of Ya Naa Yakubu I, who was succeeded first by his son Abdulai and then another Andani. When the latter died in 1899, the Dagbon kingship has since been alternating between the descendants of the two brothers.

Four kingmakers announced a successor to the Dagbon throne in Yendi after soothsaying in the event of the death of the Ya Naa until 1948 when it was replaced by a Selection Committee whose legitimacy had been in dispute. The membership which had been expanded to 11 with the inclusion of 7 divisional chiefs mostly of educated elites from Dagbon and purported to be members of the Abudu gate saw the Andani royal gate objecting to the outcome of the Selection Committee. Tsikata and Seini (ibid) observe that this came at a time of pre-independence politics, and the elites of Dagbon exploited the situation to their advantage. A king who supports a particular political party's cause was beneficial to that party in Dagbon as political fortunes are largely determined by chiefs. Thus, by 1954 according to Sibidoo (1970) cited in Tsikata and Seini (ibid) the Andani royal gate complained of the Committee system favouring only the Abudu royal family.

Politics has been identified to be one particular social phenomenon that has exacerbated social rifts and that local disputes have now become so entrenched. Staniland (1975:133)[14] states that civilian governance brought about the involvement of party politics in chieftaincy matters thereby complicating the Dagbon chieftaincy dispute. According to Staniland, the elevation of an Abudu candidate to the throne in 1953 enlivened the age-old Dagbon chieftaincy conflict once more, bringing supporters of the Andani gate in direct confrontation with government forces. It has been argued that the recent incidence of inter-party violence in Tamale is intricately connected to the Dagbon chieftaincy crises. Lentz (2000:155)[15] writes about local politics being made party political at the village level and in this way has even become deeper. Thus, the Yendi crises which erupted in March 2002 resulting in the death of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II were blamed on politics. Kelly and Bening (2007)[16] assert that the 2004 election results which saw the NDC victorious in the Dagbon constituencies represented resentment by most local people at the murder of the Ya Na and the apparent inability or unwillingness of the NPP regime to bring the culprits to book.

Political violence, in the form of inter-party clashes, has been in Ghana in the last few years preceding Ghana's independence in 1957. This had been part of the politics of Ghana in the struggle against colonial rule. Violent incidents in the early post-colonial era included attempts

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[14] Staniland, M., 1975. The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana. U.K: Cambridge University Press, p.133

[15] Lentz, C., 2007. Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana. Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, pp. 199-209

[16] Kelly, B., and R. B. Bening, 2007. "Ideology, Regionalism, Self-Interest and Tradition: an Investigation into A Contemporary Politics of Ghana, Africa, 77(2): 180-206.

on President Kwame Nkrumah's life, the most famous one being the bomb blast at Kulungugu in the Upper East Region (Tsikata and Seini, 2004)[17].

However, by the time of redemocratization in the 1990s, the political tension between the Nkrumaists and Busiasts had died down. To this end, Oquaye (1995) writes thus,

"…The social cleavage between the Nkrumaists ('veranda boys') and
Danquah-Busiasts (intelligentsia) had been bridged over the years".

Oquaye holds one of the erstwhile Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) administration's revolutionary organs under the generic name 'cadres' responsible for the violence in our modern day political dispensation. He says they were dreaded by the populace, and were identified with disrupting opposition rallies and other acts of violence during elections: an aspect of Ghanaian politics that had diminished since 1956.

5. PROPOSITIONS OF THE PAPER

In view of the stated aims, the following propositions are made for validation.

A fundamental assumption is that these inter-party clashes are often sponsored by certain faceless individual citizens of the area residing in the cities of Accra, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi. Their aim is to further their political ambitions in the area. Poverty has been identified as a phenomenon that makes violence more beneficial among the youth of the Northern Region. According to Sentongo [2004:9][18], beneath the chieftaincy conflicts [i.e.-inter-party clashes] and land disputes is the immense poverty levels in the region accounting for the unemployment of the youth. This he maintains makes them vulnerable for elite manipulation. Citing from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) in October 2000, he says even though poverty is higher in rural Ghana; it is more prevalent in the North than the South. And that the cost of these conflicts in the region often starves the region of the needed infrastructural development, as monies meant for development projects are channeled into searching for a lasting solution to the problem.

Kusimi et al (2006:225)[19], assert that the general insecurity and the lawlessness of the region tend to divert government attention from tackling pressing national issues. They claim that in the

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[17]   Tsikata, D., and Wayo Seini, 2004. "Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana". U.K: University   of Oxford Working Paper 5.

[18] Sentongo, A., [2004]. "Power Sharing and Ethnic Conflict in Dagbon and the Northern Region of Ghana". in Coexistence and Conflict, U.S: Brandeis

[19]Kusimi, J., Julius Fobil, Raymond A. Atuguba, Isabella Erawoc and Franklyn Oduro, 2006. "Conflicts in Northern Ghana: a Mirror of Answers to Sub-regional Stability and Security Questions", in *asteriskos 1/2: 209- 228.

1994 ethnic conflict, the government spent over 6 billion Cedis, providing immediate relief to conflict victims and internally displaced persons[20]. Citing Salifu and Ablordeppey 2007, Kusimi et al (ibid) state that the Dagbon crises alone made government to spend ¢600 billion (old cedis) as at November 14th, 2002. All these monies could have been used to provide the social capital needed in investing in the future of the entire northern parts of Ghana known to be lagging behind in terms of development in the country.

6. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing above, one can see the ubiquitous presence of conflicts on the African continent in the post-cold war era. These conflicts are often times span from resource-driven wars to wars for democratic participation and good governance. To bail African countries from their ailing economic conditions, the Breton-Woods institutions of IMF/World Bank prescribed democratic good governance for governments of African countries who sought economic bail outs from them. It was in this light that Ghana's long serving government of Jerry Rawlings PNDC introduced democratic reforms in Ghana in 1992. Re-democratization saw the rekindling of the old foe between the hitherto Busia-Danquah and the Nkrumaists elements in Ghana. However, this took a different dimension with most of the Nkrumaists now in the NDC against the NPP. Meanwhile the highly politicized age-old Dagbon chieftaincy disputes between the two royal gates of Abudu and Andani had been exacerbated by the return to partisan politics.

The Rawlings' PNDC/NDC regime that preceded the Kufuor's NPP in 2001 had both members of the two royal gates serving together. The paper then posits that the general insecurity of the Northern region tend to divert the government attention away from development as resources are deployed to enforce peace in the region. This paper intends to contribute to the scholarly discourse aimed at finding a lasting solution to the unique case of inter-party clashes between the main political parties in the Tamale Metropolis of Ghana. Similar works could address any gap found in this paper.

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[20] Kusimi, et al, 2006 (ibid).

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