Tuobodom Chieftaincy Conflict in Ghana:
A Review and Analysis of Media Reports

by

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Abstract

This paper is written by students of an undergraduate course in Conflict and Conflict Resolution University of Cape Coast, Ghana and seeks to showcase student ability to analyse a conflict in Ghana during the semester in which they took the course. The main purpose of the study is to analyse the Tuobodom chieftaincy conflict as reported in the Ghanaian print and electronic media between March 5, 2010 and April 5 2010. It specifically identifies the causes of the conflict, the parties to the conflict and the positions taken by them, utilizing the Onion/Doughnut and the Attitude, Behaviour and Context (ABC) methods of conflict analysis and the frustration-aggression and relational theories to explain the conflict. It is argued that one of the key reasons for chieftaincy disputes lies in the fact that in the post-colonial era, chieftaincy competes with modern state systems and several contradictions exist with respect to peoples' loyalties as well as land and succession disputes. The Tuobodom conflict is essentially a conflict between two rival chiefs, who have different allegiances historically created; one is subject to the royal house of Ashanti, the other is subject to the royal house of the Brong-Ahafo region although both chiefs are in the same geographical area. This project also seeks to show that the media reports ceased once attempts to contain the conflict by the government and the primary stakeholders began in earnest, suggesting that the media has the capacity to direct and influence public interest in conflicts. In unity, challenges in the use of the conflict analysis methodologies are also discussed, and it was found that the onion/doughnut and ABC methods cannot be satisfactorily used where the data sources are exclusively drawn from media reports, and when there are difficulties in drawing boundaries between attitudes and behaviour of stakeholders and the context of the conflicts.

Foreword

The inspiration for this paper came out of an effort to use interactive methods to teach an undergraduate course in conflict and conflict resolution at the tertiary level. In a technologically under-resourced environment in which the traditional lecture holds sway, I wanted to tailor a course that would give students the conflict analysis and management skills they needed in a relaxed classroom environment. I wanted to be able to engage their interest, and also motivate them to work. I had a class of 28 students, a class size that was well suited to facilitate interactive learning. From the onset, we rearranged the seats in the lecture room to form a circle. With that action, I established my role as a facilitator of learning and not as a lecturer who knows everything. Discussions formed the basis of lectures, and group work and presentations became regular features.

In the course of the semester an opportunity to examine a conflict presented itself. A conflict situation involving traditional leaders in the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti regions escalated and received wide media coverage, and I guided the students in an attempt to conduct an analysis of the conflict as it was reported in the media, from March 5 to April 5, 2010; utilizing the conflict analysis methods and theories we had discussed in class. They worked in small groups to execute the task which turned out to be a success. The students' enthusiasm and commitment encouraged me to suggest the idea that the entire class should develop the analysis further into an academic article. After lengthy discussions on the benefits and challenges of the task, the class decided to accept the offer. The students recognized that an added benefit would be the enhancement of their writing and research skills and negotiated for the article to be considered as an aspect of their final examination. The class discussed the format of the article and worked in small groups on the different sections of the article. The entire group willingly met several times outside official lecture hours to discuss the work, sacrificing many Saturday mornings, thus, the paper that follows is the result of our collaborative effort.

This article offers a platform for the students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired in the discipline of conflict and conflict management. Through the use of theories and methods of analysis discussed in class, this paper aims at analyzing the conflict as reported in the Ghanaian media which begins by giving a short outline of the Tuobodom conflict. Then we attempt to identify the stakeholders in the conflict. Next, we attempt to locate our analysis in a theoretical context by showing how the frustration-aggression and structural conflict theories can be employed in explaining this specific conflict. We then showcase our knowledge of conflict analysis methods by our use of the Onion/Doughnut Method and Attitude, Behaviour and Context (ABC) methodologies, and finally we discuss our findings.

The Chieftaincy Institution in Ghana

Long before the advent of colonialism, Ghanaians had their own systems of political administration. These can be grouped into two broad categories – the centralized and the acephalous (non-centralised) systems. Whereas the centralized system constitutes "the concentration of political power in the hands of a single ruler (a centralized authority) with an administrative machinery or a bureaucracy" (Abotchie 2006: 171), the acephalous communities are stateless societies. They are otherwise called egalitarian or non-stratified societies. Societies like the Konkomba, the Bimoba, the Basaari, the Chamba, the Zantasi, the Talensi, and the Lo-Dagaaba, all in Ghana, are acephalous. As a centralized form of administration, the chieftaincy institution has been the embodiment of political power in pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial times. Notable among the ethnic groups that practice this system are the Akan (the largest ethnic group in Ghana, hence some of the Akan groups include: Asante, Bono, Akyem, Agona, Akuapem, Adansi, Fante, Nzema and the Kwawu), the Ga, the Adangme, the Ewe and many dynastic kingdoms of northern Ghana, especially, the Gonja, the Dagomba (Dagbon), Mamprusi and Wala (Nukunya: 2003).

The importance of the chieftaincy institution cannot be overemphasized. In traditional Ghanaian society, chiefs performed a number of roles such as being military leaders and defenders of their people, as chief priests who perform religious roles within their jurisdictions, as symbols of identity, as founts of honour, and as sole custodians of stool lands and unifiers. Indeed, it must be indicated that chiefs played an important role in the struggle against colonial rule. In post-colonial Ghana, successive governments have worked hand in hand with chiefs. In this vein, chiefs serve as "co-ordinators of developmental effort, public relations officers for their political communities and as guardians, with the government of the day, of the basic national interests" (Brempong: 2006, 40). In performing these functions, Ghanaian chiefs are seen as the embodiment of the beliefs, hopes, fears and aspirations of their people (Abotchie: 2006, 169).

Ghana, then Gold Coast was colonized by the British from 1831 to 1957. The end of colonialism left in its wake an additional system of governance; hence we have the traditional system, which was practiced long before colonialism and the modern state, a novelty in terms of governance in Ghana. The fusion of these two divergent systems in one political entity generates a potential conflict situation. In view of this, Brempong (2006, 40) aptly observes that:

> The institution of traditional rule in a republic is a paradox. A republican Ghana has "equal" citizens and does not recognize "subjects". Yet in Ghana, traditional rulers refer to their "subjects" and speak of their "lands"… The non-literate majority of Ghanaians who live in the rural areas would not appreciate the argument that traditional or hereditary rule is incompatible with the republican ideology.

This explains the sharp contrast between the two systems. In the new system - the modern state, we see a re-definition of the functions of traditional rule as modern institutional mechanisms have taken over most of the functions of the chief. Indeed, the chief is basically a ceremonial figure who performs religious and cultural functions in the modern state (Abotchie: 2006). Thus, the supremacy of the chief in the traditional system is replaced with the constitution in the modern state wherein the chief is subject to a higher authority. And correspondingly, the 1992 constitution of Ghana, Article 270 (1), still recognizes the position of the chieftaincy institution.

The chieftaincy institution has been bedeviled with numerous conflicts. The chieftaincy institution is labeled as controversial due to the numerous chieftaincy disputes in the country. About 600 land disputes in Ghana are currently dominated by chieftaincy disputes (Abotchie, 2006). These conflicts are not recent developments and neither are they restricted to only one traditional area. By and large, almost every traditional area has encountered a chieftaincy dispute in one way or the other. Some of such conflicts recorded in recent times include the Dagbon crisis between the Abudu and the Andani gates which erupted in 2002, the Ga Mantse succession dispute in 2007, the Anlo chieftaincy conflict in 2007, the Adoagyiri crisis in 2007, Princess and Aketekyi towns' troubles in 2007 and the recent re-eruption of the Tuobodom chieftaincy conflict. Whereas some have been successfully resolved, others tend to be protracted. Key among the causes of these conflicts includes succession to stools or skins, control over stool lands and land litigation, political interference, inordinate ambition for power and the lack of accountability and transparency by some traditional rulers. Most of these protracted disputes have resulted in violent conflicts. Indeed, such conflicts have always led to undesirable developments in the affected areas and the nation at large. These devastating effects of conflict include loss of lives, the displacement of people, loss of property, outright lawlessness which results in the imposition of curfew, a move that constrains the fundamental human rights of the people and impedes on economic activities. These conditions create an atmosphere of anxiety, insecurity and distrust, posing a threat to the peace and stability of the entire nation. To control such conflicts, security personnel are deployed to the affected areas at huge cost to the neglect of important developmental issues.

This is the context within which the Tuobodom chieftaincy conflict occurred. It generated a lot of media attention in March and April 2010. Therefore, in this presentation we attempt to analyse the conflict as it was reported in both print and electronic media. These media sources are the *Daily Graphic, Daily Guide*, and the *Ghanaian Times* which are some of the key newspapers in Ghana, as well as their websites. We also used news items on http://www.myjoyonline.com, and http://www.peacefmonline.com, the websites of the popular Accra based FM radio stations Joy FM and Peace FM.

The 2010 Tuobodom Conflict[1]

Tuobodom is a predominantly farming community in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana with two rival chiefs. They are [2]Barima Obeng Ameyaw I, who owes allegiance to the [3]Omanhene of the Techiman Traditional area, and [4]Oseadeeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV also in the Brong Ahafo region and [5]Nana Baffour Asare II, whose allegiance is to the [6]Asantehene, [7]Otumfour Osei Tutu II, who is a resident in the Ashanti region. The current Tuobodom chieftaincy crisis, as reported by the media, followed the kidnapping and arrest of Nana Asare Baffour II by some youth alleged to have been ordered to do so by the [8]Techimanhene on Friday, March 5, 2010 (*Daily Graphic*: March 8, 2010). This event is a re-eruption of an unresolved conflict situation that can be traced back to 1995. During that period, the late Asantehene, Otumfour Opoku Ware II elevated the stools in four towns in the Tano-Subin traditional area, namely Bouyem, Tanoboase, Tanoso and Toubodom in the Brong Ahafo region, together with others in the Ashanti region to paramountcies in recognition of their loyalty to the Golden Stool of Ashanti (*Daily Graphic*: March 8, 2010). This event promoted Nana Baffour Asare II to an equal level with the Techimanhene. "Fighting broke out in the community on Friday night following reports that Nana Baffour Asare II, one of the chiefs in the town had been allegedly kidnapped by a body guard of the Techiman Paramount Chief, Oseadeyo Akumfu-Ameyaw. Hence, Tuobodom has lived with a protracted chieftaincy dispute for years now wherein Nana Baffour Asare pays allegiance to the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, whilst another chief of the town, Barima Obeng Ameyaw II pays allegiance to the Techimanhene." ('Communal Clashes leave Tuobodom a Ghost Town' http://www.newtimes.com.gh/story/920").

Nevertheless, the violent clashes that followed the elevation process of chiefs in the Tano-Subin traditional areas seemed to have de-escalated until in 2008 when a convoy of the Techimanhene, Oseadeeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV was allegedly fired at while it was on its way to join the [9]Akyimpemhene of Techiman and rival of Omanhene of Tuobodom, Barima Obeng Ameyaw I to celebrate the yam festival at Tuobodom. The *Ghanaian Times* on March 23, 2010 reported that "supporters of the Techimanhene had accused Nana Asare of being the brain behind the assassination attempt on the life of Oseadeeyo Ameyaw in November, 2008". The *Ghanaian Times* source further noted that the Techimanhene complained that two years after an assassination attempt on his life, no arrests had been made, although he had presented a list of the alleged perpetrators to the appropriate authorities. Therefore, in order to seek justice, the youth of the town "decided to arrest the perpetrators and hand them over to the police for the law to take its course" (*Daily Graphic*: March 9, 2010). A *Daily Guide* source added that the Omanhene of Tuobodom, Nana Baffour Asare II was abducted by personal bodyguards of the Techimanhene, Oseadeeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV on the premises of the Wenchi High Court. As a result, this abduction sparked off a shooting incident between the youth of the two factions in Tuobodom.

These clashes generated several devastating effects. As reported by the *Daily Graphic*, the clash resulted in the loss of the lives of three persons following a shooting incident with four others, including a policeman critically wounded (March 8, 2010). Furthermore, 500 residents of Tuobodom were internally displaced while "most able-bodied men, women and children had fled the town for fear of further reprisals; those displaced were catered for by the National Disaster Management Organization, NADMO" (*Daily Graphic*: March 9, 2010), a situation which constitutes a drain on the national coffers. In a similar vein, on March 8, 2010, the *Ghanaian Times* reported that "ninety two security officials have been deployed to the area to maintain law and order". In addition, the conflict hindered the progress of academic activities in that "all basic schools including the only Senior High School in the town have been deserted by both students and teachers". Economic activities also came to a standstill as major shops were closed down and vehicular transport ceased to operate. On the whole, the conflict was a disincentive to the unity, peace and development of the area ('500 Displaced at Tuobodom' http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/201003/43171.asp accessed 15/3/2010).

Stakeholders in the Conflict

Deducing from the *Daily Graphic* story on 8 March, 2010, the initial primary stakeholders or parties to the conflict were the Techiman council, lead by Oseadeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV and the Techiman youth who arrested Nana Baffour Asare II, (the other primary party) a rival chief of Tuobodon who owes allegiance to the golden stool. The secondary stakeholders were the other rival chiefs of Tuobodom, who cede allegiance to the Techiman Stool, and the entire Bono and Ashanti people. Deducing from media reports, the primary stakeholders of the conflict are the Techiman council, led by Oseadeyo Akumfi Ameyaw IV and the Techiman youth as well as the Asanteman Council, led by Otumfuo Osei-Tutu and the Ashanti youth. According to media reports, the Asantehene angrily stated that he would arrest the Techimanhene if he found him anywhere near Kumasi, the Ashanti capital [www.peacefmonline.com: "Asantehene Warns Techimanhene: I'll Arrest You": 16th March, 2010]. Thus, we consider the two-rival chiefs of Tuobodom as secondary stakeholders (the police played a shadow party role leading to conflict escalation).

Theoretical Analysis[10]

In an attempt to clarify the above, we employed the frustration-aggression and relational theories to analyse the Tuobodom conflict. Hence, John Dollard and his research associates initially developed the Frustration –Aggression theory in 1939, which was expanded and modified by scholars like Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962) to be the most common explanation for violent behavior stemming from inability to fulfill needs (Faleti, 2006;47). Thus, theorists who rely on this explanation use the psychological theories of motivation and behaviour as well as frustration and aggression (Anifowose in Faleti, 2006:47).

In an attempt to explain aggression some point to the difference between what people feel, what they want or deserve to what they actually get— the "want-get ratio" (Feierabends,1969 in Faleti 2006:47). Therefore, when expectations do not meet attainment, there is a high tendency for people to confront those, who they hold responsible for frustrating their ambition.

Taking the Tuobodom chieftaincy conflict into account using the frustration-aggression theory, it can be noticed that the youth of Techiman acted upon a pent-up frustration due to the inability of the law enforcement agency to arrest perpetrators of the shooting incident or assassination attempt on their chief on the 5th October,2008. This frustration influenced their action to kidnap the chief of Tuobodom Nana Asare Baffour II, which resulted in the escalation of the 2010 Tuobodom chieftaincy conflict.

Consequently, relational theory attempts to provide explanations for violent conflicts between groups by exploring sociological, political, economic and historical relationships between such groups. Thus, the belief here is that cultural and value differences as well as group interests all influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways (Faleti 2006:54).

At the sociological level, we also know that differences between cultural values is a challenge to individual or group identity formation processes and create the tendency to see others as intruders who have   to be prevented from encroaching upon established cultural boundaries. And like the political economy, a difference between cultural values identifies power and the advantages that it confers as a key source of tension between different interest groups. Thus, in situations where multiple groups share a common resource that is fixed in nature, the chances that each will attempt to eliminate, neutralize or injure the other, or monopolize such a resource (Maoz, 1982 in Faleti 2006:54) is a high tendency to enter into a negative relationship (Faleti, 2006:54).

Methods of Conflict Analysis: The Onion/ Doughnut Method

Realizing the above, we attempted to use the onion/doughnut method and the ABC method for the analysis of the Tuobodom conflict of 2010. This method is used to show that conflict has many layers and what appears on the surface is only a small element of the conflict. Like the onion, conflicts have many layers, and the use of this method helps the analyst access that part of the conflict that exposes the needs and fears, which inform parties to take uncompromising stands (Best, 2006: 74). Hus, the onion method illustrates the position of parties in the outer part of the onion, the interests in the middle layer, and needs and fears in the centre of the onion.
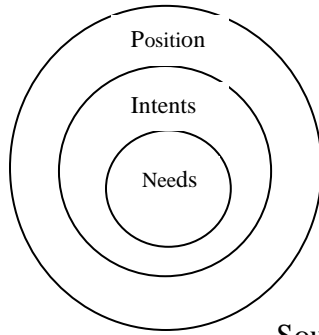
The Onion/ Method
Source: Best, S.G. 2006, p.74

The Positions of Parties to the Tuobodom Conflict

According to Best (2006:68) positions are simply the tough and uncompromising stands that parties to a conflict take and assume, which sharply differ from those of other parties. Thus, a position is based on the fears of a party; therefore, it is a protective and defensive stand. And last, positions are resorted most easily because parties usually do not want to expose themselves by sharing their fears and interest, especially with strangers and enemies.

Here, the Techniman Council as one party holds the position that there should be justice in the system. Thus, Nana Baffour Asare II who they alleged to have masterminded an assassination attempt on the life of the Techimanhene in October, 2008 should be prosecuted for involving in such a heinous crime. What strengthens this position is that Nana Baffour Asare II is a 'foreigner' in Bono land, controlling part of Tuobodom which is under the jurisdiction of the Techimanhene. The Asanteman Council on the other hand, think that even if there has been an attempted assassination, the Technimanhene and the youth should not have taken the law into their own hands to arrest or kidnap their ally chief Nana Baffour Asare, but rather they should have allowed the police to arrest the chief and allow justice to take its course. Hence those who kidnapped the chief should have been arrested when Nana Asare II was handed over to the police.

Interests of Parties to the Conflict

Interests are values pursued by individuals and groups in conflict, which may represent immediate and distant benefits or gains accruable to such parties. Unlike position, interests are what parties really want and it comes in the form of favours, concessions and material gain (Best 2006:68).

It is undeniable that the interest of both parties is that of power in order to control resources like land. The Technimanhene would obviously have control over more resource in Tuobodom if he controlled the whole area and not part, especially when it falls under his jurisdiction. This total control would increase the royalties he enjoys from the area. In a similar vein, the Asanteman Council would still want to control part of Tuobodom, which is under their jurisdiction because of the resources they also enjoy from the area, and also help to sustain their power. They therefore would want to control the area under their jurisdiction.

As Nana Obiri-Boahen, a former Minister of State at the Interior Ministry puts it, "for while authorities at Techiman feel that Tuobodom is in the Brong Ahafo region and very close by and so they ought to administer the town, history however, has severally proved that the town and some others in the region have been administered by the Golden Stool, an authority located in the adjoining Ashanti region" (http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/201003/43220.asp: "Obiri-Boahen calls for honesty in Tuobodom chieftaincy disagreements" accessed Wednesday, 10 March 2010)

Needs and Fears of the Parties to the Conflicts

Needs are what parties must have, but they are the least visible and the discussed and talked about by the conflicting parties. Needs are closely related with fears. Fears simply refer to the situations and conditions which make parties restless and anxious, and it creates uncertainty and threat perceptions. Hence, the fears of parties in a conflict actually informs them to take the uncompromising stand because individuals or groups become defensive against the things that threaten their values, identity, security, privileges and the advantage they may enjoy (Best 2006:68).

Oseadeyo Ameyaw Akumfi IV, the Techimanhene saw himself to be in danger due to the assassination attempt on his life on October 8, 2008. He was desperate for justice because he thought that if measures were not put in place to solve the problem, there could be another assassination attempt which he might not survive (http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/201003/43171.asp '500 displaced at Tuobodom').

In addition, the Techimanhene wanted to control that part of Tuobodom which is within the jurisdiction of the Asanteman Council. This is because in 1995, the Tano-Subin stools were elevated to paramouncy statuses (Tuobodom being part) by the late Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, which sparked off a bloodbath with nine people being killed in Tuobodom and Buoyem, when the late Dotobibi Takyi Ameyaw (then a serving senior military officer), opposed the elevation, claiming that those stools belonged to the Techimanhene and not the Asantehene (*Daily Graphic*: Monday, March 8, 2010: "Bloody night at Tuobodom").

On the other hand, the Asanteman Council feared that if care was not taken, the Techimanhene would take possession of land that they perceived to belong to them. This would result in the Council losing control of resources in their areas of control to the Techimanhene. Therefore there was a need to maintain control of the area (www.myjoyonline.com/news/201003/43220.asp; "Obiri-Boahen calls for honesty' http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/201003/43514.asp "Tuobodom-Techiman feud was Avoidable – Nunoo-Mensah").

The Attitude, Behaviour and Context (ABC) Method

The attitude, behavior and context (ABC) method of analyzing conflict has three inter-related components of conflict situation (context), conflict behavior and conflict attitudes. The "A" is the attitude or the perceptions that each party has of the other. "B" is the specific actions of parties directed against other parties to stop them from achieving their goals. "C" talks about the goals of parties, mostly the realization by them that such goals are incompatible. All three reinforce each other and cause conflicts in that the attitudes of conflict parties translate into their behaviour and these cause conflict. Hence negative attitudes of one party to conflict elicit negative behavior and finally leading to confrontational conflict situations. This method of conflict analysis helps in positively transforming and resolving a conflict by focusing on removing the underlying causes of the conflict which will in turn lead to more positive attitudes and behaviors from conflict parties (Best 2006:75).

The Attitude of Parties to the Conflict

A reading of all the media reports, particularly those on the websites of the FM stations, for example www.myjoyonline.com/news/201003/43220.asp; portray the picture of two feuding parties that have negative views of each other. The Techiman Council insists on the Asanteman Council leaving its land. On the other hand, the Asanteman Council holds the position that it has claims to Bono land through history. In addition the Asanteman Council views the Techimanhene as a non-law abiding person, because he allegedly took the law into his own hands.

The Behaviour of Parties to the Conflict

On the part of the Techimanhene apprehending Nana Baffour Asare and sending him to the police in for what he terms justice to take its course seemed necessary for him. Thus, the Techimanhene would be a ' dead man walking' since there is the possibility of another assassination attempt on his life.

The Asantehene also issued threats to kidnap the Techimanhene whenever he appeared anywhere near Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti region (http://news.peacefmonline.com/news/201003/40345.php), stating that he would 'grab him just as a hawk grabs a hen' (http://news.peacefmonline.com/social/201003/40158.ph, both accessed March 20, 2010). Next, the protracted chieftaincy dispute at Tuobodom in the Brong Ahafo Region took a violent turn when three persons were shot dead, with four others, including a policeman, critically wounded in a shootout (Daily Graphic, 8 March 2010). This occurred when news broke that Nana Baffour Asare II had been kidnapped by some youth from the town of Techiman. These constant clashes and demonstrations that took place as people were fleeing the area (Ghanaian Times March 8, 2010); a manifestation of the fact that the parties were apparently ready to prevent the other from achieving their goals.

The Conflict Situation/Context

The context in which the conflict occurred can be seen from two main angles. First, the Techimanhene and his subjects expected that justice should have prevailed since he reported the case to the police in October 2008. On the other hand, the Asantehene also expected that there should be due process to justice and was displeased about the fact that a particular group of people took the law into their own hands.

Challenges in the Application of the Onion/Doughnut and ABC Methodologies

In our application of the onion method, we have not been able to fully explore the needs, fears and interests of the parties involved by examining media reports alone. The ABC methodology has presented some challenges in the sense that we have found it difficult to separate the attitudes of the parties from their behaviour. Also, the context of the conflict has already been spelt out and dwelling on it is repetitive. The methodologies would possibly be more effective used in an analysis of a conflict that allows the researcher to utilize a wider variety of data sources, such as interviews with parties involved, and reviewing historical documents.

Transforming the Conflict

Also, *The Ghanaian Times* of March 18, 2010 reported that the National Security Advisor had visited the Asantehene and assured him that government would investigate the conflict and would not shield anyone involved in criminal activities. This marked the beginning of a period of mediation, and although the conflict appears to have deescalated, it is not clear from the media reports, exactly how the conflict died down. It is interesting to note that media reports on the Tuobodom conflict lessened in number from the end of the first week in April, which coincides with the end of the time period we gave ourselves for inspecting the news media.

In this context, we cannot tell whether the lull in reports about the conflict is linked to an appeal by the Techimanhene to the media to be 'circumspect in their reportage about the Tuobodom incident' (Ghanaian Times, March 23, 2010). However, this does points to the capacity of the media to make events 'visible' or 'invisible' to the public through its manner of reporting.

Conclusion

In this article we have attempted to analyze a conflict that escalated in Ghana while we were taking an undergraduate course in conflict and conflict management. We began by establishing that chieftaincy disputes have historical underpinnings. We applied the frustration-aggression and relational theories in our analysis, reasoning that frustration arising out of a slow system of justice and differences in cultural values and historical claims to land underpin the conflict. We are fully aware of the limitations of restricting ourselves to about four weeks of media reporting on the subject, and have seen the drawbacks in utilizing the Onion/Doughnut and ABC methods of analysis based on media reports only. Those methods of analysis would have been more successful if we had been able to visit the area of conflict, interview the stakeholders and verify the historical and factual reports given in the media. Thus, the conflict as we see it is far more complex than the media reports present it and has remote causes, and is therefore not based solely on the incident in October, 2008. This is because in 1995, the elevation of the Tano-Subin stools to paramouncy statuses (including Tuobodom) by the late Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, sparked a bloodbath, and unfortunately, the conflict was re-ignited through the kidnapping incident in March 2010 (see http://allafrica.com/stories/201004141056.html).

Our examination of the Tuobodom conflict has made it clear to us that conflicts often have remote and immediate causes, and may lie dormant and only to be re-ignited particularly where the interests, fears and needs of its various parties are not sufficiently addressed. And most interestingly, we have also experienced the capability of the media to whip up public interest in conflicts, and through the same means, remove those events from the public eye.

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http://allafrica.com/stories/201004141056.html? accessed April 20, 2010
http://www.newtimes.com.gh/story/920 accessed March 10,2010.

Footnotes

[1] The Peace FM website has a detailed history of Tuobodom and its disputes up to the present one. See
  http://features.peacefmonline.com/articles/201004/550.phpe (accessed 10th April 2010). See also myjoyonline.com/news/201004/4459.asp

[2] Barima: A title referring to a man who is brave, a brave.

[3] Omanhene: A paramount chief.

[4] Oseadeeyo: A title referring to a person who is perfect.

[5] Nana: A title which shows reverence and respect.

[6] Asantehene: The king of Asante

[7] Otumfour: A title of a mighty king.

[8] Techimanhene: Paramount chief of Techiman.

[9] Akyempimhene: A sub chief.

[10] For the theoretical aspects of this article, we are heavily dependent on the main textbook for the course, Best, Shadrack Gaya.2006. ed. Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa: A Reader.