

Queen Mothers: The Unseen Hands in Chieftaincy Conflicts Among the Akan in Ghana: Myth or Reality?

by

I. Owusu-Mensah

iowusumensah@yahoo.com

W. Asante and W.K. Osew

Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Legon

Abstract

The Chieftaincy institution is the most enduring establishment in the Republic of Ghana's political history. Its capacity to transcend the three phases of the country: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras as well as the three regime types: one-party, multi-party and military, demonstrates its resilience. Further, it remains the medium of expression of social, political, religious, traditional and economic authority in most communities in Ghana. In spite of the persistent spirit of the institution, in the Akan areas of Ghana it is bedevilled with protracted succession conflicts which has become one of the major sources of conflict in the country, and a key party to these conflicts is the unseen role of the Queen Mothers. Hence, the central aim of this paper is to assess the contribution of Queen Mothers in these conflicts. Documentary sources and elite interviews were the methods of data collection; the study used the Conflict Development Analysis as framework to identify the various dimensions of these succession conflicts in four Akan regions. The study resolved among others that if all lines of succession of chiefs were documented and preserved, it would be a useful guide to Queen Mothers and king makers in the mitigation of chieftaincy conflicts in the country.

Key words: Akan, chieftaincy, Queen Mother, succession, conflict.

Introduction

Chieftaincy is the most enduring institution in the Republic of Ghana's political history that has demonstrated remarkable resilience through the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. The traditional female position of the Queen Mother has survived with the institution. This endurance has been arduous and tortuous because the leadership of political parties through various regimes have tried to utilize the institution as a vehicle to satisfy sectarian and parochial political interests.

Brempong (2007) argues that in the colonial era, the institution was used as an instrument to administer colonial governance in the Crown Colony and the Protectorate. After independence, chiefs were recognised by the successive constitutions, but the extent of recognition was dependent on the regime. The Convention Peoples Party recognised chiefs on conditional terms but successive regimes revered the institution as partners in socio-economic development.

In spite of these turbulent times in the history of Chieftaincy, it still remains an important institution of traditional governance in contemporary Ghana. It is the medium for the expression of social, political, religious, traditional and economic authority in most Ghanaian communities.

The leadership of the chieftaincy institution has had tremendous effects on Ghana's development process in that it has influenced the political economy, industrial development, agricultural productivity, and the construction industry. In Ghana, 80% of the land is under the control of Chiefs which they hold in trust for the dead, the living and the yet unborn with government in possession of only 10% for public development (Odotei and Awedoba 2006).

Development oriented chiefs such as the Techimanhene and the Asantehene have educational funds that seek to help gifted but needy children. Some chiefs such as the Okyenhene have embarked on environmental programmes. Queen Mothers are not left out in this developmental agenda as they are occupied with children and women welfare projects as well as girl child education and the reengagements of school dropouts. For example, the Nkosuohemaa of the Afigya Kwabre District is in partnership with a local NGO reengaged 1000 teenage mothers back to school¹. The objective of these projects is to empower women through skill development, education, maternal healthcare and more importantly, in the eradication of poverty.

The structure of the chieftaincy from its antecedent has modelled the male to be the leader of the traditional authority. However, in a few traditional areas of the country, especially in the northern part has reserved positions exclusively for women to ensure that the communities also benefit from the leadership qualities possessed by women (Odotei, 2006). According to Brempong (2007:125), 'an Ohemma or Obaapanyin is the female counterpart of a male ruler and may be his mother, mother's sister, sister's daughter, ...'. The Ohemma or the Queen Mother wields substantial power in the Akan communities unlike the female chieftaincy positions in northern communities like the Dagomba, or the Gonja. (Brempong 2007).

The Akan succession and inheritance system entrusts the exclusive and prerogative right to nominate the prospective chief with the Queen Mother. Consequently, any qualify candidate who demonstrates an interest to be a chief must first be endorsed by the Queen Mother. The Queen Mother nominates the rightful unblemished royal heir, who has a strong moral aptitude in the community, and in the larger society. The right to nominate a prospective chief for approval by a college of kingmakers must be exercised by the Queen Mother three times. After the third nomination, the council of elders may select a fourth candidate through a conclave, thus, the fourth candidate so selected becomes a chief in consultation with the Queen Mother. But the candidate could be disqualified on moral and traditional rounds by the Queen Mother. The two factions may consequently resort to mediation or adjudication to nominate the rightful heir to be installed as chief.

This paper seeks to assess the contribution of Queen Mothers in the Akan regions in chieftaincy conflicts in various traditional areas. The extent to which these Queen Mothers have perpetuated these conflicts or contributed to the resolution of the conflicts is a major significance in this study. Hence, this work is based on the hypothesis that the vulnerability of women during conflict compels them to be key advocates of peace, and that they may use every opportunity to halt conflicts in their respective communities.

Methodology

The study covers four out of the five Akan regions in the Republic of Ghana. Thus, the Ashanti region was purposively eliminated because of the influence and authority of a centralised chief (Asantehene) to resolve protracted chieftaincy dispute in the jurisdiction. The study adopted a primarily qualitative research methodology as a research design for the purposes of data collection and analysis. Face to face semi-structured interviews were conducted in twenty traditional areas in the Brong-Ahafo, the Central, the Eastern and the Western regions afflicted by conflicts emanating from succession disputes. The respondents were Queen Mothers, Regents, Divisional Chiefs, Registrars of Traditional Councils, Clan Heads (Abusuapanyin), and some youth groups. The respondents answered standard questions on succession practices in the Akan chieftaincy system, and in peculiar, questions relating to their traditional areas, especially on the role of Queen Mothers in the protracted conflicts.

Theoretical Framework

An analysis of women's contributions to the process of conflict ought to be established from a theoretical perspective to provide the appropriate direction to guide discussion. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed the Conflict Development Analysis Framework to assess the relationship between genders and conflict, hence, an examination of the unique roles and responsibilities of males and females in conflicts.

Goetz and Treiber, (2012) elucidate the relationship between Conflict Development Analysis Framework and other conflict analysis models with three major elements that interrelate with other theories in the conflict resolution process, they are: (1) analyzing context (actors, causes and capabilities); (2) understanding the dynamics of conflicts as they unfold (scenario-building to assess trends); and (3) making strategic choices about remedies and responses (with a stress on institutionalizing non-violent means of resolving future conflicts).

Goetz and Treiber, (2012) note that gender relations tend to intersect with many other lines of social cleavage, including class, race, ethnicity, age and geographical location to determine the major actors in a conflict and the relative capabilities of different actors to intensify or resolve conflict. Accordingly, women reinforce and exacerbate conflicts processes, for example, they serve as combatants, or they may provide services to combatants to achieve the conflict objectives. Goetz and Treiber, (2012) consequently strongly argue that the tendency to see women primarily as victims of violence has obscured the many other roles women play in provoking and pursuing conflict or in building peace. They contended that any engagement of major actors in a conflict in negotiation and resolution efforts must involve women because their different experiences give them different perspectives on the social and economic tribulations to be addressed in any peace accord and in post-conflict governance arrangements. Goetz and Treiber (2012) have distinguished between three types of causes of conflict: the root structural factors (systematic political exclusion, succession problems, demographic shifts, economic inequalities and economic decline and the attendant search for economic gains), the catalysts or *triggers* (assassinations, nomination or election fraud, corruption scandals, human rights violations) and the manifestations (surface explanation means by which is the interest are pursued) in the gender analysis, as well as in the roles played by the sexes that differ.

With regards to the second element of understanding, the dynamics of conflicts as they unfold, Goetz and Treiber (2012) note that the analysis of conflict dynamics must track the changing influences of different actors and the factors that strengthen the hands of mediators and change agents. Women may, for example, acquire unaccustomed social and political leadership roles as a conflict progresses to different levels. Post conflict reconstruction programmes require a return to normal life which women may reject in order to accept their previous position. Goetz and Treiber (2012) therefore contend that strategic responses should aim at responding to women's practical and immediate needs, and at the same time, challenge the gender-based inequalities that prevent women from taking public decision-making roles that would enable them to contribute to long-term conflict prevention.

According to Goetz and Treiber (2012), gender-sensitive conflict monitoring systems use information about women and men, and gender relations, and information from women and men to understand conflict dynamics, identify actors and processes that would prevent conflict, and build peace in a gender-sensitive way.

This focus on information about women, men and gender relations implies an understanding that tensions in gender relations can add to our understanding of the structural causes of conflict, the triggers of conflict, or the manifestations of a past or ongoing conflict. Also, the focus on generating information from women and men implies an understanding that women, because of their structurally differential position from men – even within the same class or ethnic group – perceive social, economic, environmental, and political changes somewhat differently from men, and react differently to certain social phenomena (Goetz and Treiber 2012).

Conceptual Analysis of Chieftaincy in Ghana

A chief is defined by Article 277 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana as ‘a person, who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a Chief or Queen Mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage.’ Article 275 further disqualifies members of royal families whose conduct in the public life does not promote societal values and virtues. It stipulates, ‘... if he has been convicted for high treason, treason, high crime or for an offence involving the security of the State, fraud, dishonesty or moral turpitude’.

Additionally, Section 58 of the Chieftaincy Act 759 delineate the hierarchical structure of chiefs recognized in the Republic of Ghana, with the Asantehene and the Paramount Chiefs occupying the apex position in the Ashanti regions, followed by the Divisional Chiefs, then the Sub-Divisional Chiefs, and finally the Adikrofo². It is observed that the lower-level chiefs receive instructions from the higher chiefs in all facets of administration (Owusu-Mensah 2014).

Subsequently, Odotei (2010) reveals that there have been various controversies surrounding the Constitutional definition of Chiefs. The definition does not actually capture who a Chief is, but rather defines it with reference to a chief or Queen Mother, whereas in some societies distinctions are made between the Queen Mother and the chief (Odotei 2010). Owusu-Mensah (2014) clarifies this ambiguity by pointing out that among the matrilineal Akan, the top leadership positions and the responsibilities are divided between males and females. He states that the heir to the *stool* (a position of power is symbolised by the possession of a royal stool) is usually a male, but a female ought to nominate him. Hagan (2006) interrogates the constitutional definition in reference to lineages. According to him, lineages are susceptible to disintegration when there is an expansion of the royal family as a result of population growth and access to higher education, thereby increasing the number and the quality of eligible candidates. In this circumstance, families have limited options but to succumb to demands that stools or skins should rotate among royal families or gates. Hagan concludes that over time, continuous population increase may render such arrangements ineffective, and family members may begin to see themselves as aliens because the plausibility of access to the throne during their lifetime is virtually closed. The limited opportunity nurtures seeds of conflict amongst family members.

The major challenge to the development and growth of the chieftaincy institution is the question of succession. The institution is bedevilled with several conflicts emerging from succession to the throne. Tonah (2011) argues that the problem of succession is in all spheres of the institution: divisional, paramountcy and kinship levels. Corroborating this position Owusu-Mensah (2014) states that 64 out of the 263 national total of paramount chiefs are under contention. Further, Bombande (2011) observes that chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana spawn with varying sources. He further provides a geographic distinction in the conflicts and maintains that in southern Ghana, they are largely based on determining the right person in line of succession to the stool, whereas in northern Ghana the conflicts are steeped in historical inter-group relationships and competition.

A core component of the succession downside in chieftaincy institutions is the process of nominating, and the position and power of the nominator of the heir to the throne. Hagan (2006) maintains that the role of these nominators has become very difficult because affluent contenders contest for the office even where the claims of such candidates to the royal stool is doubtful and cannot be demonstrated or verified. Also a source of these nomination challenges emanates from occasions where nominators or electors are willing to (unwind) set aside the eligibility requirements for a candidate in exchange of financial and other material benefits (Alhassan and Tonah 2010). Consequently legitimate, but less endowed candidates are denied their rightful positions and the position is given to illegitimate, but wealthy candidates (Alhassan and Tonah, 2010). Nominators vary from northern and southern Ghana wherein in northern Ghana, a higher king or chief of centralized hierarchical groups nominates the prospective chief (Nabila 2011), and in southern Ghana, the nomination is at the domain of the Queen Mother of the royal family.

The Queen Mothers, beyond the appointment and supervision of the installation of the chief, may continue to assert her interests in the management of the traditional area. These interests continue to generate conflicts between the chiefs and the Queen Mothers, especially in the quest for the appropriation of land administration. These conflicts originate from the alleged *nkwaseabuo* (high depth of cheating in Akan tradition) attitudes of some chiefs. According to Akan customs and traditions, the land belongs to the dead, the living and the yet unborn, therefore any proceeds from any sale of any stool property such as land must be appropriated to the respective traditional political units within the traditional area. If the chief fails to honour part of the contract, a consequence is often agitations to destool chiefs led by their Queen Mother who will charge the chief with misuse or sale of stool property.

The Akan Political System

Ghana has ten administrative regions: Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta and Western. Five of these regions are Akan dominated. These are the Ashanti, the Brong Ahafo, the Eastern, the Central and the Western regions. The Akan are the largest and most populous ethnic group in the country, they constitute 47.5% of the Ghanaian population (2012:5), and thus, they dominate the political leadership of the country as a result of their earlier exposure to Western education influenced by the work of the evangelical activities of early Christian missionaries. The pre-colonial Akan states (Oman) practised centralised administration with a chief as the executive. According to Wiredu (2001) the Akan political system is based on non-partisan politics that functions on the principles of consensus building that galvanise the ideals of appropriate traditional institutions for the purposes of collective development of the people. The Akan are predominately matrilineal and have a society with the consequential inheritance and succession systems. Dube (1997) argues that in the matrilineal societies, the conception and position of women, as well as the gender relation in the family and wider kinship is (protuberant) prominent. In the Akan political system, Queen Mothers have a strategic responsibility and role in the chieftaincy installation process. They nominate candidates to the stools of their respective traditional areas. The history of the nominating role originates with Akan cosmogony which maintains that women are the founders of various clans (Boaten 1992:1). Boaten (1992) further argues that they were said to be the repositories of wisdom and knowledge, therefore complicated issues were referred to them for their wise counselling, hence the concept *Yenkobisa Abrewa* (let seek counselling from the old lady) made the Queen Mother a strong socio-political figure in the Akan system and today they continue to enjoy the stature accorded to them.

The nominee for a stool is handed over to a college of kingmakers who scrutinize and vet the person to ensure that the qualities and pedigree befitting the status of a Chief are present. The Queen Mother has three (3) chances to nominate a candidate for the consideration by the kingmakers. However, if for valid reasons all her nominations are not accepted, the kingmakers will make a nomination. Most of the conflicts associated with chieftaincy in the Akan regions are centred on the Queen Mother's nomination function because several eligible candidates may strive to be nominated. Cohen (1977: 14) argues that historically, the office of Queen Mother was principally ceremonial, but served as a converging point for opposition to the chief or several opposing perspectives in the traditional governance system of the Akan. The Queen Mother is expected to provide an objective perspective on any issue under consideration. However, Rattray (1956) and also Meyerowitz (1951, 1960) object to this ceremonial stature associated with the Queen Mother and argued that the *Ohemaa* (Queen Mother) wield political power and was and still is the most powerful person in Akan society and can assume the full control of the central authority. Thus, she could become the *Omanhene*, the chief. Commenting on the role of Queen Mothers in the installation of the chief, Farrar (1997) maintains that the African political structures recognise all segments of society and therefore, they are granted a form of representation or voice in the political structures at the highest level.

Specific Conflict Cases Involving Queen Mothers

Here we seek to examine specific cases and the contribution of Queen Mothers in stimulating protracted conflicts in their respective traditional areas. These disputes emanate from the negligence of duty by the Queen Mother or the non-involvement of the Queen Mother in the installation of the chief.

In the Brong Ahafo region, 14 out of the 14 vacant stools, as well as the legitimacy of 2 sitting chiefs are being contested, with their cases pending before the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chiefs. These are Konkoma, Offuman, Kwatwoma, Nsoatre, Wenchi, Berekum, Odomase No. 1, Dwan, Mo, Nkomi, Sampa, Suma and Akronie. The longest dispute concerns the Dwan Traditional Area, which commenced in 1995 (20 years ago) and the shortest concerns the Akronie Traditional Area, that started in 2012 (three years ago).

In the case of the Odomase No. 1 Traditional Area, the dispute commenced in 2007. The Queen Mother, Nana Abenaa Boatemaa I, selected an unqualified candidate and presented him to the college of kingmakers who also accepted him as the prospective chief. The required and necessary traditional and customary rites were performed which paved the way for the swearing-in ceremony. Immediately after the swearing in ceremony, the Abakomahene filed a petition at the regional house to challenge the qualification of the new chief, as well as a mandamus to compel the Queen Mother to select the right candidate from the appropriate family.

The case of the Wenchi Traditional Council also commenced in 2008. The Queen Mother Nana Antoaa Samangyedia II filed a petition to challenge a new installed chief of Wenchi at the Supreme Court after judgments from judicial committees of both the Brong-Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs and the National House of Chiefs upheld the position of the kingmakers. Her objective was to nullify the installation of the new Chief after the death of the former Chief, Nana Abrefa Moore Bediatou. According to the petition, she was not allowed to perform her sacred traditional and customary function of nominating the candidate for the kingmakers to consider. Consequently, appropriate processes were not followed in installing the Chief that the customs and traditions of the Wenchi people, according to her, they had been breached. The Supreme Court judgment ordered the Wenchi Traditional Council to involve the Nana Antoaa Samagyadua II in the process, by granting her the privilege to nominate the prospective candidate (s) for the consideration of the kingmakers.

In the Eastern region, the Queen Mothers in Akwamu and the Akyem Kotoku traditional areas have been parties to chieftaincy conflicts. Unlike in Wenchi, where the Queen Mother sued the kingmakers for usurping her authority, in these two traditional areas, the Queen Mothers have been sued for their wrongful choices in the process of nominating candidates for these stools.

In the Akwamu traditional area, the petitioners maintain that ascension to the stool rotates between two gates of the royal family, - the Yaa Ansaah and Botwe gates³. The last chief was a member of the Botwe gate, subsequently the next chief ought to be a member of the Yaa Ansaah gate, unfortunately, the Queen Mother has nominated a member of the Botwe family as the prospective chief without any compensatory reason adduced.

In the case of the Akyem Kotoku traditional area, the family rotational system operates between the Frempong Manso and Attafuah houses of the royal family. The custom and tradition of the royal house mandate the Queen Mother to consult the two families in the nominating process of a prospective chief. The stool became vacant in 1998, following the demise of Okoforoboo Agyeman Attafuah IV, and the Queen Mother nominated a candidate from the Frempong Manso house for consideration by the collage of kingmakers without any form of consultation from the Attafuah family. The candidate performed the required and customary practices and was installed as the next paramount Chief of the traditional area. The Attafuah house initiated the appropriate legal process against the Queen Mother for negligence of customary duties and the failure to consult as well as for prohibiting a candidate from their family from acting as the paramount chief of the Akyem Kotoku Traditional Area.

The two selected cases of Central region are Effutuakwa and Enyan Denkyira traditional areas. The Effutuakwa paramount stool has been contested since 2006. The Queen Mother, Nana Afransie IV, maintains that the rightful person nominated and approved by the kingmakers, Mr. Frank Amoah, had committed a crime and had consequently violated the customs and traditions of the area by having carnal knowledge of his sister (incest) – per this incident the candidate committed a taboo. An investigation was carried out to ascertain the veracity of the accusation, and it was proved otherwise. Several efforts to convince the Queen Mother to rescind the decision have proved futile. The Queen Mother has subsequently nominated a nephew, Mr. Aseidu Badu as the new heir to the throne. According to the Queen Mother, a chief must be an individual whose character and conduct in public life is unblemished.

The contention of the Enyan Denkyira paramount stool started in 1996. The Queen Mother, Nana Otua Aprambu II, exhausted the right to nominate a candidate after the college of kingmakers rejected her three attempts. The kingmakers' proposed candidate was also rejected by the Queen Mother, but the kingmakers ignored her counsel and proceeded to install the chief as Osabarima Otsibu VI. The Queen Mother initiated a legal process with an injunction placed on the statutory functions of the chief. The Queen Mother consequently performed the functions of the paramount chief with all the privileges accorded to her. This function assumed by the Queen Mother confirms Rattray's (1956) position that the Queen Mother is the most powerful person in the Akan political system and can assume the position and functions of the Paramount Chief in a period of crisis.

The Western region is engulfed with 15 protracted chieftaincy conflicts including some emanating from successional problems. These includes Ellubo, Sefwi-Wiawso, Sefwi-Akontombra, Atuabo, Enchi, Upper Axim, Gwira Bamiakor, Awiaso, Ntaakrom, Anokyi, Princess Town, Effia, Sekondi and the Shama traditional areas. Hence, we use the cases of Shama and Sekondi as samples of conflict in the Western region.

The Sekondi Paramount stool dispute started in 2003 after Nana Ewua Duku II's demise. The Sekondi traditional area has five eligible families qualified to propose as chiefs. The process to install a new chief was initiated by the Queen Mother Nana Afua Hema II and a college of kingmakers. The Queen Mother ignored all the appeals from the other families and nominated a candidate from the (same) Anarfi family who had ruled since 1942. The *Abusuapayin* Kwasi Nipa Refena initiated the legal process to compel the Queen Mother to nominate a candidate from any other family, apart from the Anarfi family. And also, a second case of Western region is the Gwira Bamiako case where the Queen Mother Nana Adwoa Efia IV was denied the opportunity to perform the prerogative traditional responsibility to nominate a candidate in 1999. The Queen Mother pursued the legal process from the Judicial Committee of the Regional House of Chief until the Supreme Court determined the case in her favour and instructed the college of kingmakers to permit her to nominate the candidate (s) as chief of the traditional area.

Emerging Issues

Goetz and Treiber (2012) in their conflict analysis development framework argue that the analysis of conflict dynamics tracks the changing influence of different actors in the social and political processes that have the capacity to introduce conflict. In the case of the Odomase No. 1 Omanhene petition, the traditional rights had been performed, including the new chief swearing the oath of office. However, a faction of the royal family raised an objection to the process, thus, this section becomes the new entrant in the social process by initiating the conflict. And the case of Akyem Kotoku (mentioned above) supports and can be explained through the context of the theory in that a section of the family initiated the process at the climax of the social process.

Also when a conflict rages on, women (for instance) may acquire unaccustomed social and political leadership roles (Goetz and Treiba 2012). This is epitomized in the Effutuakwa and the Enyan Denkyira cases where Queen Mothers were required to be presidents of their respective traditional councils as results of the conflicts and to assume all spheres of responsibilities including representing the traditional council at the Central Regional House of Chiefs.

Goetz and Treiber (2012) contend that strategic responses to remedy conflicting situations should aim at responding to women's practical and immediate needs, and at the same time, challenge the gender-based inequalities that prevent women from taking public decision-making roles that would enable them to contribute to long-term conflict prevention.

The cases studied show that Queen Mothers were denied the opportunity to perform public decision making roles and as a result, they resorted to internal traditional structures such as the Judicial Committees of the Regional and the National Houses and state judicial systems to provide appropriate avenues to meet their needs in conflicts.

The conflicts of Queen Mothers and the college of kingmakers can be analyzed in the context of proxy conflicts, beneath the positions and the perspectives held by the two parties, the political parties also demonstrate their key interest in the ownership of chieftaincy institutions. This is because the institution is a key agent in social and political mobilization, which are critical to the fortunes of political parties. For example, the Wenchi case is polarized along the dividing line between two major political party traditions.

Some scholarly proposal has been made to resolve conflicts related to chieftaincy succession, hence, Bombande (2011) argues that three key approaches should inform how it should be carried out that include the power, the rights, and interest-based approaches⁴. Out of these approaches, Bombande (2011:32) maintains that the 'interest-based approaches through dialogue should be the mainstream approach of resolving chieftaincy conflicts' in Ghana. With the interest-based approach, dialogue, negotiation, conciliation, facilitation and mediation are recommended. This approach attempts to get to the root cause of the problem and to find lasting solutions that are acceptable to all parties in the conflict. Further, Bombande puts emphasis on Article 273 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, which prohibits government from assuming the role of resolving chieftaincy conflicts, and gives appellate jurisdiction to the National House of Chiefs on all matters concerning chieftaincy, and argues that this should be strictly followed.

Furthermore, Nabila (2011:58) stressed that all traditional areas have rules, regulations, taboos and strict qualifications with regard to the chieftaincy lines of succession. And thus, Chieftaincy succession conflicts arise and become apparent because parties circumvent the traditional processes. However, this varies from one community to the other, which has given room to factors such as wealth, educational status, partisan considerations, religious and ethnic affiliations introduced without due respect for traditional rules of succession. According to Nabila (2011), for a stable and strong chieftaincy institution in Ghana, all contesting parties, Queen Mothers, kingmakers, the youth, and other members of the ruling class and the general public should keep strictly to the rules of succession embodied in the customary law and usage of all traditional areas. Nabila's argument clearly reveals that there are existing customary arrangements for the selection or nomination of candidates eligible to be made chiefs; however, the problem has been how these customary arrangements can be strictly adhered to. The challenge has been in the effective implementation of the laid down rules. It is against this backdrop that since the year 2000, the National House of Chiefs has mounted an elaborate programme to codify the lines of succession to stools and skins, as mandated by the 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, however, the challenge with this useful venture is that the pace has been very slow due to challenges of funding⁵.

Testing the Hypothesis

This study started with hypothesis that women and children are the victims of conflicts and therefore their contribution to conflict is minimal. However, a study of twenty traditional areas in four Akan regions over a period of one year demonstrates that women are the stimulators of chieftaincy succession conflicts in Ghana. Therefore this paper rejects the hypothesis based on the data collected from the field.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that women are unseen hands and strategic parties in the various successions chieftaincy conflicts in the Akan regions of the Republic of Ghana: - the Brong-Ahafo, the Central, the Eastern and the Western regions. Even though the available literature and public discourse on conflicts in Ghana overlook the contributions of these women in stimulating these conflicts in their respective traditional areas, this paper has argued for an existence dynamics in the various conflict cases considered above. These dynamics have revealed three different key actors in the conflicting processes with each of them influencing a particular conflict differently. These actors include the Queen Mothers, the kingmakers and other members of the royal families. Further, the paper demonstrates that at the heart of these interests is the Queen Mothers' nominating role or her being barred from nominating a prospective candidate.

A closer analysis of the role of Queen Mothers in the various cases illustrate that they are perceived to have a vested interest in a particular candidate for chief at the detriment of the tradition and custom of the people (e.g., the Effutuakwa case). In other traditional areas, they are seen as conspirators with kingmakers in nominating an unqualified candidate (e.g., Akwamu, Odumase Number 1 and Sekondi cases). And Queen Mothers are often relegated as unimportant and denied the opportunity to partake in the enstoolment process as the Wenchi and Gwira Bamiako cases reveal, therefore, we make the following recommendations to mitigate the growing chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana.

Queen Mothers must remain impartial as a first step towards avoiding conflicts in a traditional area. They must be very objective and adhere to customary laws and traditions in the nomination process of candidates to the stools (hence, a position of power). Hence, an important factor that can make Queen Mothers neutral is for a special arrangement to be made to support them financially. It would be appropriate to apportion part of the stool royalties for this purpose.

Queen Mothers should be educated on the impact of their responsibilities in the society, especially their role in the installation of Chiefs and its consequences on governance and development locally. There should be workshops and seminars that will enlighten Queen Mothers on the roles expected of them in their respective societies. Educating the Queen Mothers on the structure of local governance, for example, could enable them to understand the responsibilities in the society as role models who should eschew active partisan politics. This will prevent them from liability to the whimsies and caprices of politicians as well as prevent them from public ridicule and safeguard their reputation from bribery and corruption. And male chiefs especially the *Gyesehene* must refrain from exploiting the low level of formal education of Queen Mothers in the nominating process of new chiefs.

Queen Mothers must strive to establish and build a cordial and harmonious relationship with the college of kingmakers to define key societal interests which override parochial and personal interest. These interests should define the selection of future leaders of the traditional area. This cooperation will help to prevent factionalism in the traditional area during such crucial periods as the nomination and the installation of new chiefs.

Additionally parties in chieftaincy disputes have over the years been encouraged and compelled to make use of a dispute processes and technique that can act as a means for disagreeing parties to come to an agreement short of litigation (an alternative dispute resolution mechanism) instead of resorting to the formal court system. Unfortunately this process via the Judicial Committees of Regional and National House of Chiefs has wasted time as the result of a lack of requisite resources and poor budgetary allocations from the central government for committee meetings. This, it is recommended that special budgetary allocations be provided for the Judicial Committees of the Regional Houses of Chiefs and the National House.

Finally, this paper succeeded in demonstrating that most of the conflicting parties, especially the Queen Mothers, resort to the court system to resolve conflicts. Others also resort to the Judicial Committees of the Regional or National Houses or the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system. The above ways of resolving conflicts have not been conclusive and there are countless instances where the resolved conflicts have relapsed. Hence, we tend to agree with Goetz and Treiba (2012) in their framework that an option to remedy the situation is to revive traditional local-level family or kin-based governing systems, a process that the National and the Regional Houses of Chiefs is doing by conducting research into the lines of succession to the various stools and skins in Ghana in documenting them for future reference. This is a way of institutionalizing a non-violent means of resolving present and future conflicts within the chieftaincy establishment in Ghana.

References

- Alhassan, A. S. and Tonah, S. (2010). If you don't have money why do you want to be a Chief? An analysis of the commercialization of justice in the houses of Chiefs in Ghana. *Ghana Social Science Journal* 7 (1), 1-13.
- Anne Marie, G. and Anne-Kristin T. (2012). Gender and conflict analysis. Policy Briefing Paper, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
- Boaten, N. A. (1992). The changing role of Queen Mothers in the Akan polity. *Research Review (NS)*, 8 (1 and 2).
- Bloomfield, D. and Reilly, B. (1998). The changing nature of conflict and conflict management. *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators*, pp. 7-28.
- Bombande, E. (2011). Sources and resolution of chieftaincy and land conflicts in Ghana. *Chieftaincy Bulletin*, 1(2), pp. 24-38.
- Brempong, A. (2006). Chieftaincy: An overview. In: *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, governance and development*. Odotei, Irene K. and Awedoba, Albert K. (eds). Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers. pp. 27-41.
- Brempong, A. (2007). Transformations in traditional rule in Ghana (1951-1996). Accra, Institute of African Studies.
- Cohen, R. (1977). Oedipus Rex and Regina: The Queen Mother in Africa. *Africa*, 47(1), pp. 14-30.
- Dube, L. (1997). Women and kingship: Comparative perspectives on gender in South and South-East Asia. Tokyo Japan, United Nations University Press.
- Farrar, T. (1997). The Queen Mother, matriarchy, and the question of female political authority in precolonial West Africa monarchy. *Journal of Black Studies*, 27(5), 579-597.
- Ghana Population and Housing Census 2010, Ghana Statistical Service (2012).
- Hagan, G. P. (2006). Epilogue. In: *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, governance and development*.

Odotei, Irene K. and Awedoba, Albert K. (eds). Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers. pp. 663-673.

Miall, Hugh (2004). Conflict transformation: A multi-dimensional task. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. Available from <http://www.berghof-handbook.net>.

Mayerowitz, E.L.R. (1951). *The sacred state of the Akan*. London, Farber and Farber.

Nabila, S. J. (2011). Factors for peaceful and orderly succession of chieftaincy: A requirement for stable and strong chieftaincy in Ghana. *Chieftaincy Bulletin* 1(2): pp. 57-68.

Odotei, I. K. (2006). Women in male corridors of power. In: *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, governance and development*. Odotei, Irene K. and Awedoba, Albert K. (eds), pp. 81-100. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.

Odotei, Irene K. (2010). Chieftaincy in Ghana. A paper presented to German students on the Go Africa Go Germany Programme, Noda Hotel Fumesua-Kumasi, available at irenekodotei.org/content/chieftaincy-ghana (accessed: 06/06/14).

Owusu-Mensah, I. (2014). Politics, chieftaincy and customary law in Ghana's fourth republic. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*. 6(7): pp. 261-278.

Rattray, R. S. (1956). *Ashanti law and constitution*. London Oxford University Press.

Tonah, S. (2011). Changing characteristics and factors of chieftaincy succession and land disputes in Ghana. *Chieftaincy Bulletin* 1(2), pp. 40-53.

Wiredu, K. (2001). Democracy by consensus: Some conceptual considerations. *African Philosophy and Analytic Tradition* Vol. 30 Issue (3).

Endnotes

¹ See www.ghanaweb.com.

² See Chieftaincy Act, 2008 Act 756, (Accra: Assembly Press, 2008).

³ Mr Moro Seidu, February 14, 2014.

⁴ The Power-based approach according to Bombande (2011) is where the state deploys its coercive powers through law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order whereas the rights-based approach is where the court system is used to determine the winner or loser to a case.

⁵This was revealed through a statement by Dr. H. S. Daannaa, currently minister in charge of chieftaincy and culture in respect of a paper presented by Naa Prof. Nabila on the Subject of “Chieftaincy Disputes and the Codification of Lines of Succession” cited from Chieftaincy Bulletin 1(2):69-70.