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EXPLORATION OF CHIEFTAINCY SUCCESSION DISPUTES IN GONJALAND: A STUDY OF THEIR MANIFESTATIONS IN THE BOLE TRADITIONAL AREA

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ABSTRACT

The once cohesive Kingdom of Gonja has now become a host to many chieftaincy succession disputes. It is this situation that triggered the investigation of the sources of the disputes and their manifestations particularly in the Bole Traditional Area of the Kingdom. To achieve the objectives of the investigation, a pragmatic research philosophy was adopted and deductive and inductive theory approaches developed for the investigation. A mixed method design was employed where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, using questionnaire and interview guide. The primary data was complemented by extensive literature review on chieftaincy succession disputes in Ghana and Africa as a whole. The data was processed using content analysis and the Statistical Package for Social Solution (SPSS). The results revealed that the main sources of the conflicts were the commodification of thrones, desire to control resources and political influence. The investigation also revealed that the manifestation of the conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area was a result of power struggle between the current Yagbonwura, Tuntumba Boresa I, and the then Bolewura, Awuladese Pontonprong I. The effects of the dispute include division among the people,

avoidance of social functions and disloyalty to the Yagbonwura. Some of the recommendations are the need for the central government, political parties, the Bole District Assembly and all stakeholders to show a high sense of morality by refraining from the exploitation of ethnic sentiments for electoral favours and a reduction of the role and power of the chief so that calculated risk of perpetuating chieftaincy violence will become greater than their “pay-off.

Keywords: Ghana, Gonja Kingdom, Yagbonwura, Chieftaincy, Disputes

INTRODUCTION

As observed by Adiyaye and Misawa (2006), the chieftaincy institution in Ghana and Africa at large has played pivotal role in economic and social development of African communities. Its adoption for the execution of the Colonial Indirect Rule policy by the British is a proof of the institution’s vitality since time immemorial. The chieftaincy institution has survived the wave of change that is characteristic of modern, post-modern and contemporary period driven by advancement in technology and scientific knowledge. Odotei (2010) observes that

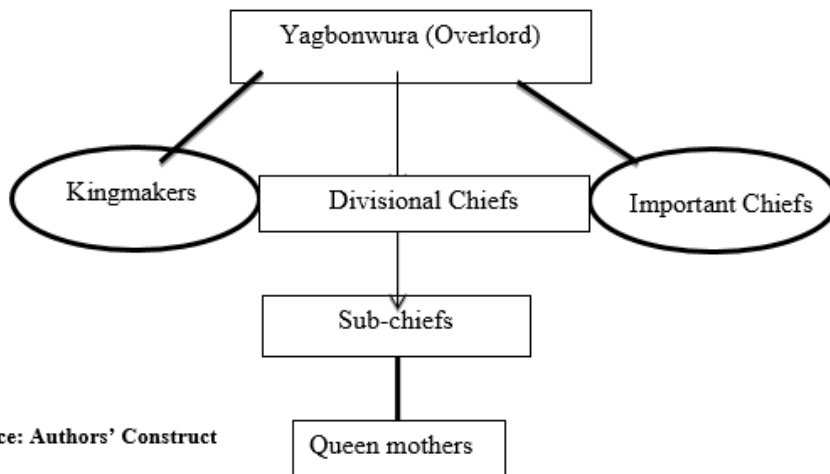
till date, chiefs act as mouth piece between their subjects and the central government, exercise maximum control over land under their jurisdiction, and make vital contribution to governance and administration in Africa.

Chieftaincy is not valued any less in Ghana. The position of chiefs is guaranteed under the Fourth Republican Constitution of 1992. Article 270(1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana upholds the institution of chieftaincy together with its traditional councils as established by customary law and usage. Article 277 of the 1992 Constitution defines a chief as ‘a person who hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected, enstooled, and enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage. Chiefs in Ghana wield a lot of powers. They have great control over the people and resources within their jurisdiction. It is, therefore, no

surprise that people fight to get installed as chiefs.

The powerful nature of the Gonja Kingdom makes their kings and chiefs equally powerful within the northern territories of Ghana and beyond. The Gonja kingdom has an overlord who is the Yagbonwura, and the final adjudicator in disputes resolution in the Kingdom. He is often supported by nine kingmakers and five divisional chiefs who are often referred to as important chiefs. There are also sub-chiefs who assist the divisional chiefs to rule the divisions and their respective areas of jurisdiction. The sub-chiefs who are overseers of villages within the Kingdom are also supported by queen mothers who are enskinned alongside their male counterparts (GLYA 2013). Figure 1.1 presents the structure of traditional chiefs in the Gonja Kingdom at a glance.

Figure 1:1 The Structure of the Chieftaincy Institution in the Gonja Kingdom.



Source: Authors' Construct

BACKGROUND

According to Braimah (1967), the Gonja ethnic group is one of the groups that have had their history recorded by

Muslim scholars who accompanied them to modern Ghana. Wilks (1751) found out that the Gonjas migrated from the ancient Songhai Empire when the empire was at the heights of its power many years before

the Hijra 1000. Juwula (2010) indicates that the Gonjas, formerly referred to as the Mandingos, entered modern Ghana in 1546. Wilks (1751) points out that when the Mandingos exuded the Songhai Empire, they headed northwards into modern day Ghana under the leadership of Askia Mohammed who ruled them for over three decades and later handed the throne to his direct son, Musa Askia, in 1528 due to ill health. The genesis of Mussa Askia's rule was met with some resistance from another Askia Mohammed's son, Ismail Askia.

The struggle for power between these two created civil unrests in the Kingdom, which were the first of many to come (Braumah 1976). Askia Mohammed, though was still alive, could not do much to settle the unrest caused by his two sons due to declining health. Braimah (1976) indicates that the instability continued up to the reign of Landa in 1546-1594. After Landa, Wam reigned for nineteen years from 1595 to 1615 then followed by Amoah from 1615 to 1634 and Lanta Limu, the father of Ndewura Jakpa, who reigned between 1634 and 1675 and later abdicated for his son, Ndewura Jakpa, who reigned from 1675 to 1697 (Braumah 1972). Juwula (2010) notes that Ndewura Jakpa led the troops and expeditionary forces into various battles against Safalba, Brifor and Vagla in the present-day territories of Northern Ghana where they fought and conquered the people, took over their territories in where it is now called the Bole-Bamboi area. Goody (1967) found out that, after recording huge successes in the Bole area, the forces moved eastwards and conquered Dagombas in Daboya where they established a camp for their forces whence, they free the area of other inhabitants, such as the Konkonbas, Nawuris and Chumurus.

Japowura (2010) points out that Ndewura Jakpa, the founder of the modern day Gonja Kingdom, continued his

conquest spree to nearby territories and installed his sons in the areas he conquered as sub-chiefs. These territories are now known as divisions in the Gonja Kingdom. These divisions which have survived ethnic conflicts, European rule and even modern governance are Wasipe, Kpembe, Bole, Tulwe, Kong, Kandia and Kusawgu. To this day, the paramount chiefs who head these divisions refer to the YagbonWura as their father and overlord of the Gonja Kingdom.

Burukum (2006) found out that the Gonja kingship system started with seven ruling divisions but was later reduced to five after Kong and Kandia were expelled from the kingship. Goody (1967) notes that the expulsion was due to the fact that Yagbonwura Nyantakyi, who ascended the throne from Kong in collaboration with his brother, Kandiawura, employed the services of Samori, a slave raider, to fight the people of Bole and its surrounding villages with his forces when he (Yagbonwura Nyantakyi) had a misunderstanding with the chief of Bole. Braimah (1967) notes that the Gonja kingdom is federated since the various divisions are semi-autonomous. Thus, matters are handled in the various divisions and where people are dissatisfied, they are free to seek the jurisdiction of the Paramourty. According to Jon (2007), this arrangement works perfectly in the beginning until late 1878 when the Yagbon seat became unpopular because the Yagbonwura lost authority over the federating divisions. Therefore, the Yagbonwura could only depend on the help of his house hold for his farm works as the divisional chiefs from the five divisions became rather non cooperative and neither supply food to the king nor supply him with labor. Alhassan (2011) corroborates this when he indicates that even taxes collected were not sent to the Yagbonwura as it used to be.

One would wonder why the Yagbonwura suddenly lost the support of

his sub-chiefs from the five divisions. Tonah (2012) says it was simply because the Yagbonwura at that time was not the rightful person to be there. He became the Yagbonwura because of the refusal of chiefs from Kpembe, Kusawgu, Wasipe and Tulwe to ascend to the Yagbon skin when it was their turn to do so. They never wanted to leave the comfort of their homes and areas of jurisdiction to settle in Nyange near Sawla in the present day Sawla-Tuna-Kalba District, which was the seat of the Yagbon Kingdom as at that time and happened to be a very small village. The Yagbon throne remained unpopular until Yagbonwura Mahama Dangbonga took over the throne in 1912 (Braimah et al, 1969). On ascending throne in 1912, Yagbonwura Mahama moved to Zugu near Kusawgu which is virtually centrally placed within the Gonja Kingdom and worked hard on uniting the Gonja Kingdom once more. Braimah (1966) notes that Yagbonwura Mahama Dagbonga organised two conferences in Yapei in 1923 and 1930 under the watch of the British colonial administration. These meetings gathered momentum and came up with a Constitution entitled “enquiry into the constitution and organisations of the Gbanye kingdom” (Jawula and Lewpowura, 2010). The Constitution drafting committee constituted of Mr. A.C. Duncan Johnson, British Commissioner for Southern Province, Mr. A.W. Cardinal, District Commissioner for Western Gonja and 24 principal chiefs of the Gonja Kingdom.

This document, for the Gonjas, has been the alpha and omega of chieftaincy succession in modern times (Jawula 2010). The “constitution” was kept in the memory of drummers who recited it on state occasions, such as the enskinment of a kings or important chiefs or important festivals like Damba. It spells out who qualifies to be king or chief, which gate the nominee to the skin should come from, who the king makers are, who qualifies to

participate in what ceremony, who qualifies to enskin a chief and lastly, the processes the chief to be must go through (Brukum 1997).

Dankwa (2004), however, singles out the document as the source of the troubles currently being experienced in Gonjaland. He cites the disruption of customs and traditional modes of chieftaincy successions by the constitution which he saw as being the artifact of the British Colonial Authorities at that time. Ali (2009), however, disagrees with Dankwa (2004), stating that the constitution gave chieftaincy succession in Gonjaland form and structure. It is difficult to side any of these arguments, but looking at the instability that characterised the Gonja Kingdom right from the days of Musa Askia and Daoud Askia to the present day, one is likely to conclude that the problem predates the emergence of the constitution which is a later product. The constitution rather paved way for stability as it provided some specifications for persons who must rule the Gonja Kingdom and procedures of selection.

There are some physical tests a person must pass before they are considered eligible for the chieftaincy titles. According to Brukum (2006), for instance, the candidate to be installed must be double sighted or must have both eyes in their natural position. They must be married and must be a person of sound health. Furthermore, an agreement on the list of chiefs qualified to mount the paramountcy was reached and the chiefs pledged allegiance to the Yagbonwura. The constitution also determined the hierarchical sitting positions of various chiefs in the Gonja Kingdom. Thus, the constitution helped to establish a strict system of rotation that brought about some peaceful succession histories in Gonjaland both at the centre and at the periphery (Jawula, 2010). Furthermore, embossed in the 1930 constitution were the nine (9) kingmakers who are Sonyowura,

Damongowura, Choriwura, Debrewura, Mankpanwura, Kulawwura, Kpansheguwura, Busunuwura and Nsuawura. They assist the Yagbonwura to adjudicate cases and settle disputes within the Kingdom. Odotei (2006) admits that the constitution of the Gonja Kingdom has indeed withstood the test of time. Since it was adopted, peace and unity at least at the Yagbon level were achieved.

It is disheartening that the arrangement which hitherto has worked perfectly to ensure peaceful succession in the Gonja Kingdom, has taken a dramatic twist of installing two chiefs for the same community, such as Buipe, Mandari, Tinga, Kafaba, Sonyo, Kibilma, Kalidu, etc. Rosumen (2001) insists that the phenomenon of having more than one chief in a community or division, which is not the norm, emanates from varied sources. One of the reasons for this anomaly is because of the division among kingmakers over who has the right to install chiefs in the divisions and subdivisions. This has created a situation where the Yagbonwura installs his chiefs and the divisional chiefs also install theirs in the same community, creating a duality of authority where some subjects pay loyalty to one chief but not the other. Kaye and Beland (2001) admit that this and many other reasons have brewed so many unsettled chieftaincy disputes in Gonjaland as some of the cases are filed in the court instead of using the traditional or customary lay down mechanisms in adjudicating chieftaincy succession matters and disputes in the Kingdom to settle them out.

In the Bole traditional area, chieftaincy succession disputes are becoming quite dramatic, characteristically taking the form of duality of authority to the royal skins (Tonah, 2012). A typical example is the division among kingmakers over the selection of the Mandariwura. The Mandari skin is a gateway to the Bole Paramountcy. Any royal who intends to

ascend the throne of the Bolewura must first of all be a Mandariwura. When the skin of Madari became vacant in 2010, the then incumbent Bolewura, Mahama Awuladese Pontonprong I, enskined one Mr. Abdulai Issahaku Kant as Mandariwura. However, a section of the Safope gate whose turn it was to ascend to the throne disagreed with the Bolewura and petitioned the Yagbonwura for redress. The Yagbonwura did so in favour of one Alhaji Abukari Abudu who was also enskined as Mandariwura (Kombat, 2010, June 31). This created tension between the supporters of the two chiefs accompanied by pockets of violence in Bole. The Bole District and the Northern Regional Security Councils intervened to maintain peace and order by imposing dusk to dawn curfew on the Bole Township. Mr. Abdulai Issahaku then filed the case at the Northern Regional House of Chiefs for determination.

One wonders why the Bolewura refused to submit to the decision of the Yagbonwura in that regard. This is a signal that the traditional systems might not have been working as it ought to have been. This made the examination of the factors undermining the traditional chieftaincy succession procedures and indigenous mechanisms for settling such disputes in the Gonja Kingdom with specific focus on the Bole Traditional Area crucial. This study, therefore, investigated the sources of chieftaincy succession disputes in Gonja Kingdom and their manifestations in the Bole Traditional Area in terms of how the disputes undermined the social and cultural coherence of the people in the Bole Traditional Area and how its effects on development. The study also examined the perpetrators and victims of the disputes, and its impact on different occupational groups and sectors of the economy of the area. The central task of the study, therefore, was to provide a historical narrative of the chieftaincy succession disputes in the Gonja

Kingdom, their emergence over time and how they generated a stalemate in the nomination and installation of a new chief for Bole. The study, therefore, aimed to address the following questions; what were the sources of chieftaincy succession disputes in the Gonja Kingdom? What were the manifestations of these succession disputes in the Bole Traditional Area? In what way did the succession disputes in the Bole Traditional Area undermine the social and cultural coherence of the people in that area? What traditional mechanisms could be employed to address the dispute? Answers to these questions were to provide the foundation for an effective review of existing public policy or create a new one for addressing the problem, and prescribe measures to counter chieftaincy succession conflicts in the Gonja Kingdom as a whole and beyond.

The research is situated in the context of conspiracy theory as expounded by Yong (2010) and Game theory as expounded by Von Neumann (2006). Conspiracy theory is explanatory prepositions that accuses two or more persons or an organisation of having caused or cover up through secrete planning and deliberate action, an illegal or harmful events or situation (Charles, 2007). The Game theory addresses zero-sum power dynamics in which one person's gains result in losses for the other participants. Myerson (1991) explains that conflict theory seeks to scientifically explain the general contours of conflict in society: how conflict starts and varies, and the effects it brings. The central concerns of conflict theory are the unequal distribution of scarce resources and power.

METHODOLOGY

The research philosophy that was adopted for this study is the pragmatist philosophy as against either positivism alone or interpretivism alone. Pragmatists

admit the fact that there are many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research, that no single point of view can ever give the entire picture and that there may be multiple realities (Sounders, 2010). This gives room for the usage of multiple research strategies and methods. The researchers, therefore, settled on this research philosophy which allowed them to use methods that enable credible, well-founded, reliable and relevant data to be collected that advanced the research (Kelemen and Rumens 2008).

In line with the pragmatic philosophy, both deductive and inductive theory development approaches were used to arrive at conclusions which were derived from the reviewed literature and the primary data collected during the survey. The choice of a pragmatic philosophical approach also informed the choice of the research methodology; a mixed method design was adopted for the study where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and triangulated for validity and reliability purposes. Wilson (2014) thinks the mixed method is most appropriate for a pragmatic research philosophy so that both qualitative and quantitative data will be used to answer the research questions since pragmatism combines both the positivists and interpretivists philosophies.

The researchers interpreted the qualitative data without subjecting it to any rationalization or logic processes. The researchers made meanings out of the illogical statements of respondents about the sources of the chieftaincy succession dispute in Gonjaland and the manifestations of such disputes in the Bole Traditional Area. At the same time, the researchers also collected measurable and quantifiable data and compared the responses of respondents with what other researchers have established as the sources of conflict in general. The adoption of a mixed method design required that, at some point, the researchers became a part of the research as it is done in the

interpretivists tradition and it also required that, at some other point, the researchers got detached from the research as it is done in the positivistic tradition. Survey and narrative inquiry strategies were adopted for the study where quantitative data was collected with the use of a questionnaire and focus group discussions while interview guides were used to gather qualitative data.

Data for the study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected largely from residents of the Bole traditional Area who were eighteen (18) years and above and institutions that are conversant with issues of chieftaincy succession in Gonjaland while Secondary data was collected from sources, such as books, journals, magazines, periodicals, dissertations, newspapers, government reports, discs and the internet. Using Cochran's formula, a sample size of one hundred and twenty-five persons (125) was selected from a total adult population of eight thousand (8000) at 95% confidence level. A voters' register was solicited from the Bole District Electoral Office for that purpose. This was used as a sampling frame. The names of respondents were grouped into twenty-five different clusters according to their polling units. Simple random sampling was used to select four (4) persons from each cluster. Additionally, ten (10) key informants from the Northern Regional House of Chiefs, Bole District Security Council, Bole Traditional Council and the Gonja National Youth Association were selected due to their in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. The table below summarizes the demographic characteristics of respondents who were selected for the study.

Table 1.1: Distribution of Respondents according to Age, Chieftaincy Gate, Religion and Occupation

Background	Variable	Freq uency	Perce ntage
Age	18-25	41	31.4
	26-35	41	33.3
	36-45	20	16
	46+	21	16.3
	Total	125	100
Chieftaincy Gates	Safope	23	19.2
	Jagape	22	18.33
	Denkeripe	26	21.0
	Kotobiri	26	21.0
	Others	29	24.16
	Total	125	100
Educational Status	Formal	111	92.5
	Non- Formal	14	15.8
	Total	125	100
Occupation	Housewife	28	23.3
	Trader	40	33.3
	Farmer	28	23.3
	Civil/Public Servant	16	13.3
	Student	8	6.7
	Total	125	100.0

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in table 1.1 above, majority of the respondents were still in their middle ages (33.3%). The respondents were fairly distributed across the four chieftaincy gates in Bole Traditional area; Safope (16.7%), Jagape (18.3%), Denkirepe (20%) and Kotobiri (16%). Those respondents who never belonged to any of the gates constituted 20.8% of the total respondents. Most of the respondents (92.5%) have had some form of formal education, only 15.8% never had any formal education. The respondents derived their livelihood from various activities, such as farming (33.3%), trading (23.3%), and being house wives (23.3%). A few were employed in the public sector.

Data generated from the respondents was complemented by extensive desk or literature review on key issues of the topic, including conflicts, chieftaincy successions, and the history of the Gonja Kingdom. The review provided an understanding of the global and national dynamics of the problem based on existing research knowledge, and from policy-driven conferences and workshops. Media tracking and records of chieftaincy succession disputes in Northern Ghana provided further sources of information. Qualitative data obtained from the survey was analysed using Moritz (2010) 'Processual' content analysis where events, actors and processes were interpreted taking into consideration the backgrounds and institutional factors that might have influenced events or actions. The Statistical Package for Social Solution (SPSS) analyses the quantitative data where raw data was coded, tables and relevant graphs drawn to aid understanding. A Pearson correlation was run to determine the relationship between the chieftaincy gate of respondents and the commodification of thrones as a source of conflict so as to determine if there was a relationship between the dispute and social and economic development of Bole.

Cross tabulation was also run to see if the age, chieftaincy gate and occupation of respondents had any bearing to the answers they gave as the sources and consequences of chieftaincy disputes in Gonjaland. Findings were tied up to the reviewed literature and the theoretical frameworks that were employed to guide the study.

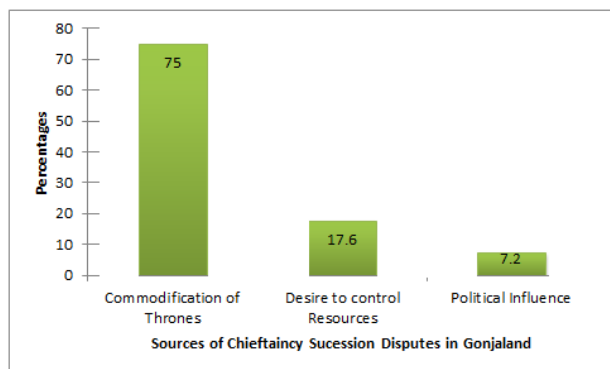
Sources of Chieftaincy Succession Disputes in Gonjaland

Chieftaincy in Ghana is normally an ascribed status from particular families or ethnic groups. Among the Akans in Southern Ghana, ascension to the stool is through maternal lineage whilst tribes in Northern Ghana do so from paternal lineage, though in the case of Gonja, some skins are specifically reserved for maternal descendants of the royal family. In the past, the roles of chiefs were exclusively to lead their people to war and defend, protect and extend their territories (Odotei, 2000). The nature of warfare for the chiefs in contemporary times has changed. The enemy is now poverty, hunger, disease, squalor, illiteracy, crime, injustice, environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, greed, ignorance, etc.

The problem is, rather than mobilising the people against these new 'enemies', some chiefs are engrossed in material acquisition. Chieftaincy in some jurisdictions constitutes one of the fastest means of making money or acquiring wealth (Ali, 2009). Apart from the powers that chiefs wield, they control resources, such as land, forest and mineral deposits. These generate wealth for them through royalties and rent (Coleman, 2007). This explains why acephalous societies which were not organised under the domain of any chiefs, have been galvanised and condensed under chiefs for easy control and are gradually beginning to appreciate and revere the institution of chieftaincy (Dokurgu, 2011).

When the respondents were asked to indicate what they thought were the sources of the chieftaincy succession conflicts in Gonjaland, their responses were varied as shown in figure 1.1 below:

Sources of Conflicts in Gonjaland



Source: Field Survey

As indicated in figure 1.1 above, 75% of the respondents, representing 94 of the total respondents, mentioned the commodification of thrones as the main source of the various chieftaincy succession disputes in Gonjaland. They said that chieftaincy was a highly respected institution, however, it has become a money-making venture for kingmakers. According to them, whenever there is a vacant skin, people who are deemed qualified within the succeeding gate lobby. The lobbying, in recent time, they claimed, has taken a different trend. Those interested lobby with money and in most cases, the highest bidder wins, thus creating dissatisfaction among other people who are qualified but may not be well resourced to bid effectively. A key informant corroborated this when he said as follows:

“... chieftaincy institution was the preserved of honest and upright people who were role models in the society.... our skins are now being ‘auctioned’ to the highest bidder because of monetary gains”

Sulemana (2008) also found that the chieftaincy conflicts in Dagbon were

partly fuelled by the arbitrary installation of sub-chiefs by the Dagbon skin. Suaka, Tseer and Kombiok (2018) also found that the Bimoba-Konkomba conflicts in Bunkpurugu Yunyoo got escalated because of the arbitrary installation of chiefs in the Bimoba and Konkomba communities in Bubkpurugu Yunyoo District by the Nayiri, the overlord of Mamprugu.

Intertwined with the commercialisation of thrones is the desire to control resources within the various divisions of the Gonja Kingdom. Tonah (2012) observes that one of the reasons why the North is noted for a mirage of chieftaincy conflicts is because the chiefs have, over the years, rather than concern themselves with serious issues that affect their subjects, are busy selling lands and taking bribes from subjects, self-interested persons and also engaging in partisan politics at the expense of their dignity and loyalty from their subjects. These have made them lose the respect of their subjects to the extent that their pronouncements are no longer respected, thus a state of anarchy. Thus, 17.5% of the total respondents opined that the conflicts arose from the fact that Gonjaland is endowed with a lot of natural resources like Gold, coal, fish and vast cultivable and grazing lands. Once one is made a chief, he has control over these resources. This situation is best explained by the game theory; the source and intensity of the conflict emanates conforms to the zero-sum power dynamics of Games Theory. The enskinment of any of the parties in the succession conflict is conferment of power and authority on the beholder that will not be accessible to those denied the chance. It thus becomes a zero-sum power game in which where one chief is enskinned, the powers and the values that are conferred and transferred to that chief cannot be exercised by another person contemporaneously. This finding corroborates the finding of Coleman (2007) when he discovered that conflicts

surrounding who gets what are often difficult to resolve because if there is no plenty of a given resource or what is being competed for and no more can be found or created, it becomes a win-lose situation. Once the other gets, the other loses. The researcher also observed that most of the areas where the succession conflicts occur in Gonjaland were areas where there was either gold or timber. Collier (2003) also spoke about the desire to control natural resources by groups as a major cause of conflict. He estimates that close to fifty armed conflicts that were active in 2001 had a strong link to natural resource exploitation, in which the desire to control helped to trigger, intensify, or sustain violence. Myerson (2009) found out that in the Middle East, disputes over oil fields in Kuwait, among other issues, led to the first Gulf War. It is therefore not surprising that the desire to get access or control resources could bring about chieftaincy succession conflict in Gonja.

Another factor that came up strongly as one of the sources of the chieftaincy succession conflict in the Bole Traditional Area was political influence. 52 persons, representing 40% of the total respondents, mentioned that the appointment of the Mandariwura, Chief Abdulai Issahaku, was politically motivated. Many of the key informants mentioned political influence as the source of the succession disputes in Bole.

B-Awuriba (2016) found that there is a very strong link between the New Patriotic Party and the immediate past Bolewura. He points out that he was a former Progress Party (PP) MP for West Gonja (now Bole/Bamboi and Sawla/Tuna/Kalba, Damongo and Daboya/Mankarigu) in 1969. Similarly, the Mandariwura elect, Mr. Issahaku Abdulai Kant, was a staunch Popular Front Party (PFP) member and for that matter, an NPP member. He is married to Madam Ajara Yakubu, the daughter of Tolon-Naa Yakubu Alhassan Tali (the 1979 running

mate to Victor Owusu of the PFP) and a direct sister of the current Tolon Chief, Tolon Naa Major Abubakari Sulemana, a former security expert in President John Agyekum Kufuor's government. Besides, the attendance of the coronation of the former Bolewura by the late NPP National Chairman, Jake Otanka Obetsebi Lamptey, and Dr. Mahmud Bawumia, the then Running-mate of Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo, the then NPP Flag-bearer, speaks volume of the former Bolewura's NPP affiliation and the perceived political manipulations. Mahama (2015) also establishes a positive correlation between chieftaincy disputes in the North of Ghana and Ghanaian politics. Similarly, Awedoba (2016) observes that politicians in Ghana take advantage of the disputes between chieftaincy gates to galvanize the support of one gate over the other, thereby worsening the disputes.

Manifestations of the Gonjaland Chieftaincy Succession disputes in the Bole Traditional Area

Jawula (2010) found that disagreements over chieftaincy successions are common in most of the divisions constituting the Gonja Kingdom, despite the existence of the 1930 constitution. He cited the 1992 Kafaba chieftaincy succession conflict between the Attape gate and the Kankanpe gate, the 2001 Yapei conflict between the Jakpape and Solaepe gates and the 2011 Buipe conflict between the Jinapor and the Lebu gates as examples. Therefore, the case of Bole was not an exception. According to Braimah and Iliasu (1965), the type of Chieftaincy Administrative system mostly practiced in the Bole Traditional Area is the Ambassadorial or High Commissioner system whereby a royal is appointed a chief and posted to head a community. It is Ambassadorial when the natives leaving in that community are non-Gonjas by origin and High Commissioner when they are Gonjas. Bi-Awuriba (2016) observes that

the chieftaincy system in that Traditional Area allows the superior chief (Bolewura) to appoint, move or shuffle chiefs around communities in the area. Mahama (2015) points out that the stakes of succession are high in that Traditional Area because, unlike other Traditional Areas, such as Kpembi, where every gate knows who is next to a vacant skin, Bole has a system in which all sub-chiefs within a gate are usually qualified to occupy a vacant skin. This kind of situation has heightened tensions over the Mandari stool since the days of Yagbonwura Mahama Dagbonga and Bolewura Nathoma Jobodi in the early 1990s. Braimah (1965) made us understand that the Mandari skin, according to the tradition of Gonja and the Bole Traditional Area, is the entry skin to the Bole Paramountcy and, therefore, any person or royal who is enskinned as Mandariwura is a potential Bolewura. There have, therefore, been many controversies in the past over the entry to the Mandari skin. The recent one, however, has taken a dramatic twist because the Bolewura, rather than allowing the succeeding gate, Safope, to select who amongst them was best qualified to ascend the throne, decided to make the choice for the gate. He based the bridge of protocol on the inability of the Safo gate to provide a consensus candidate.

B-Awuriba (2016) points out that the situation pushed some members of the Safope gate to appeal the decision of the Bolewura in Yagbon. A latent power struggle between the Yagbonwura and the Bolewura stacked its neck out creating a constitutional crisis in the Kingdom. According to the 1930 constitution, the appointment of a Mandariwura is the sole mandate of the Bolewura because Mandari is under the jurisdiction of the Bole Traditional Area. The Yagbonwura could, however, intervene in case of any controversy (Jawula, 2010). As events unfolded, Chief Issahaku Abdulai Kant

and Chief Abubakari Abudu were installed as chiefs of Mandari by the Bolewura and the Yagbonwura respectively. This intensified the already existing tension and the case was later referred to the Judicial Committee of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs. On the 23rd of December, 2018, the Judicial Committee released its judgment which upheld the decision of the Bolewura because the appointment of the Mandariwura was within his jurisdiction. This, however, was not the end of the controversy. On the 31st of May 2017, Bolewura Pontonprong, who installed Chief Isshaku Abdulai Kant as Mandariwura, passed on. According to the chieftaincy rotation arrangement in the Bole Traditional Area as indicated earlier, the Mandariwura was supposed to succeed the Bolewura after the funeral has been performed. The succeeding chief was supposed to perform the final funeral rites of the Bolewura and then ascend the throne. There were two chiefs who had claims to the Bole skin. The Mandariwura appointed by the deceased Bolewura and the one appointed by the Yagbonwura. The final funeral was postponed by the Regional Security Council because it was likely to degenerate into violent conflict (Ghana web, 2010).

The Yagbonwura, on 6th June, 2018, allowed his appointed Mandariwura, Abubakari Abutu, to perform the final funeral rites of the late Bolewura and installed him as the new Bolewura the same day. This was followed by a swift response from the other Mandariwura, Abdulai Issahaku Kant, who also installed himself as the new Bolewura (Borisa, 2018). On the day of his installation, the conflict nearly escalated into full confrontation as gunshots were fired from both sides killing one person and injuring others. A dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the Bole Township.

The problem, however, is far from over. According to the 1930 Yapei agreement, the Yagbonwura has the jurisdiction to appoint the traditional head of each divisions of the Gonja Kingdom. The Bole Traditional Area also has a system of chieftaincy rotation which permits only persons who have occupied the Mandari skin to ascend the throne of Bole as Bolewura. Chief Abdullai Issahaku Kant was installed by the Bolewura which is constitutional. This was contested and appealed to the Yagbonwura who appointed Chief Abubakari Abudu as Mandariwura instead. This decision was annulled by the Judicial Committee of the Northern Regional House of Chiefs, making Chief Issahaku Abdulai Kant the rightful successor to the Bole throne. However, the 1930 constitution also provides that only the Yagbonwura has the right to appoint and install a divisional chief. He has appointed his then Mandariwura, Chief Abubakari Abudu as Bolewura. How this is resolved determines whether Bole will be in hellholes or heaven's gate.

This background shows one thing; the Yagbonwura had lost control over his subject, the then Bolewura. Fifty-six per cent (56%) of the respondents mentioned that the Yagbonwura is losing control over the divisional chiefs because of mistrust. A key informant corroborated this as follows:

"It appears Yagbonwura himself takes money and installs chiefs, so there is a certain degree of mistrust between him and some of the divisional chiefs".

Some other respondents (42%) opined that there is also mistrust between some of the subjects and some divisional chiefs. This lack of trust often results in insubordination where the divisional chiefs install their own chief and the Yagbonwura also installs his. This situation has always created tension between the supporters of Yagbonwura installed sub-chiefs and the supporters of

the sub-chiefs installed by the divisional chiefs.

Explaining the reasons why the Bolewura had to appoint his nephew as the Mandariwura, seventy-five (75) persons, representing 47% of the total respondents, mentioned that the inability of the Safope gate members, whose turn it was to occupy the Mandari skin, to present a consensus candidate pushed the Bolewura into making that decision. A key informant corroborated this as follows:

He asked them several times if he could install anyone of his choice since they were unable to reach an agreement on who should be installed and they answer in the affirmative. I was there, he repeated the question over three times and had the same answers from the elders of the Safo gate

The researchers observed that almost all the respondents who were from the Jagape gate and 18 and 13 from the Dankeripe gate and the Kototobiri gate respectively also shared a similar view. However, only one person from the Safope gate held this view. Most of those from the Safope gate felt it was the manipulations of the Bolewura and some influence from the central government which made it impossible for their elders to arrive at a consensus candidate. The 1930 Gonja chieftaincy rotation constitution also states categorically that the eldest from the succeeding gate should be allowed to occupy the skin. One is left to wonder why the Bolewura could not appoint the eldest of the Safope gate members as the Mandariwura but rather settled on Chief Abdulai Issahaku Kant who was much younger. It is also surprising that the Safope eldders could not come up with a consensus candidate for the throne. Was it a case of conspiracy?

Yong (2010) writes that "every real conspiracy has at least four characteristic features: groups not isolated individuals. In this case, the group consists of the Bolewura and the elders and kingmakers of Mandari. The second element of Yong's

conspiracy theory is illegal or sinister aims. In this case the illegal aim is for the Bolewura to appoint his nephew as the Mandariwura so that he will support him rather the hunt to replace him as the Bolewura. A third element in Yong's theory is orchestrated acts, not a series of spontaneous and haphazard ones; in this case, the elders tactically diffused any discussions that would have led to the people of Safope gate to arrive at a consensus candidate. The final element of Young's conspiracy theory is secret planning, not public discussion. The plan to prevent the emergence of a consensus candidate from the Safope gate by the then Bolewura and the elders and kingmakers of Safope gate was done in secret and still remains a top secret.

Effects of the Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area

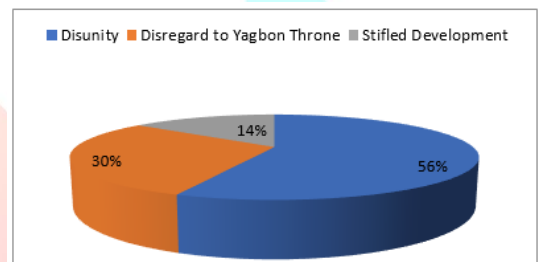
Mortz (2010) analysed the various stages of conflict escalation where he noted that conflicts escalate from small to large scale. Prutt and Kim (2004) also outline the stages of conflict escalation where they said escalations start when parties begin to invest in the conflict, such as the purchase of arms and ammunitions. From there, it shifts to persuasions to violence where parties become more interested in attacking the opponent rather than the argument, then it gets to a stage where there is an increase in the number of people involved in the violence, for instance, from disagreement of the choice of a Mandariwura between the then Bolewura and the Safope elders to disagreement between Jagape gate and Safope gate members as a whole. The conflict is said to be fully escalated when there is a shift from the pursuance of the goal to the desire to hurt the other party; from solving the problem to massacre.

The magnitude of the damage caused by any conflict depends largely on the stage of escalation. At the moment, the chieftaincy succession conflict in Bole has not gotten to the final stage of escalation

yet but the effects it has had on the people cannot be underestimated. Suaka and Tseer (2019) found that whenever there is a conflict that has fully escalated, lives and properties are lost, people are displaced and trust is broken. Tonah (2012) discovers that, apart from the physical damages caused by conflicts, such as destruction of lives and properties, conflicts create long lasting psychological effects on victims which cannot be easily erased.

Even though the conflict in Bole has not got to the full stage of escalation, inhabitants have had to live with its social and economic effects. When the researchers asked the respondents to mention some of the effects of the chieftaincy succession conflicts in area, their responses were as varied as shown in the graph below.

Figure 1.2 Effects of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts in the Bole Traditional Area



As indicated in figure 1.2 above, many of the respondents (56%) opined that the conflicts have greatly undermined the social cohesion that characterised the Bole Traditional Area prior to the emergence and escalation of the conflict. This was corroborated by the response of a key informant during an interview;

... We are all from the same family so we related as brothers and sisters.... the division is stronger between the Safope gate members and the Jagape gate

members, even though one could see some elements of a cross gate support

When the researchers asked if the dispute had affected social functions in the community, 78% of the respondents mentioned that they still attended social ceremonies like marriages, funerals and cultural dances together but not with the same passion that used to characterise such occasions. Most of those who were more concerned about the disintegration of the social cohesion were persons aged between 18 and 36. This is indicative of the fact that people at those ages are mostly youthful and energetic and love to socialise with their pairs. Those who were older were more worried about the effects of the conflicts on the image of the Yagbonwura. Forty-seven (47) persons representing 30% of the total respondents mentioned that the authority of the Yagbonwura over the Bolewura is at its lowest ebb because of the disputes. They said that on many occasions, the Yagbonwura invited the then Bolewura but he never went and that the Bolewura was no longer sending the annual tributes or royalties that each divisional chief is supposed to present to the Yagbonwura as custom demands. To them, these are indicators that point to the fact that the then Bolewura had little or no respect for the Paramountcy. 80% of those who held this view were from forty years and above. This is indicative of the fact the aged are more worried about preserving the customs and traditions of Gonjaland.

Interestingly, the researchers observed that farmers and traders were more worried about the effects of the conflict on the development of the Bole Traditional Area. When the researchers asked how the existence of the chieftaincy disputes has affected development in the area, 20 persons, representing 30% of the respondents, who were either farmers or traders mentioned that, since the dispute started, Bole township and its surrounding villages had not witnessed any

development because there was no chief who could steer the affairs of the area or lobby for development projects from the central government. Besides, investors are scared to come and invest in the area since it appeared Bole township was sitting on a timed bomb. 60% and 80% of the key informant agreed that development was hampered by the disputes since people feared to do any long-term investment because the dispute could go violent at any moment. The researchers further observed that most of the people from Mandari had relocated to other parts of the Bole Traditional Area for fear that Mandari could be in flames any moment. Collier, (2004) found that there is a strong diabolic correlation between conflicts and failures in development: conflicts powerfully retards development; and equally, failures in development substantially increase proneness to conflicts. She further indicates that the poorest communities or countries are likely to be stuck in a 'conflict trap; a cycle of war and economic decline.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Gonja Kingdom has been one the most admired Kingdoms in the Northern territories of Ghana due to its peaceful chieftaincy succession system. From its founding by Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa in 1675 to the sitting Yagbonwura, Sulemana Jakpa Tuntumba Borea I, the Kingdom has been ruled by over twenty-eight Yagbonwuras. The cohesiveness of the Kingdom, however, has been undermined by the various chieftaincy conflicts that seem to have engulfed the Kingdom and characteristically taken the form of dual installation of chiefs by the Yagbonwura and Divisional chiefs. According to this study, the situation is traceable to internal corruption of customs and traditions by both the overlord and divisional chiefs

who rather than adhering to the provisions of the 1930 constitution for chieftaincy successions, resort to hand-picking individuals for various reasons. This has reduced the institution of chieftaincy in the Kingdom to a self-serving contraption.

The direct result of this is that the institution of chieftaincy has lost its leverage of controlling the people and maintaining social cohesion. It is obvious that chiefs are no longer there to serve the interest of the people but for the pursuit of their parochial interest, such as personal enrichment, control of resources and acquisition of political power. This situation is gradually reducing the once cohesive and centralised Kingdom of Gonja to a state of anarchy. The Yagbonwura is unable to exercise authority over divisional chiefs, so are the divisional chiefs to sub-chiefs up to the subjects. Thus, the Yagbonwura installs chiefs who are not recognised by divisional chiefs. In defiance, divisional chiefs also install their own chiefs in the same communities.

This situation is compounded by a constitutional crisis where the Yagbonwura is given unlimited power over the divisions that federate the Kingdom while at the same time pronouncing the divisions semi-autonomous. In the Bole Traditional Area, for instance, the people have their own domestic chieftaincy rotation plan in place which has been in operation even before the reign of Bolewura Nathoma Jobodi in 1912. The 1930 constitution, however, has empowered the Yagbonwura to appoint divisional chiefs, which means that the Yagbonwura could disregard with any pre-arranged chieftaincy rotation plan that is in place and appoint any one he chooses among the royal family. This is what has brought the stalemate in the Bole Traditional Area.

While the Yagbonwura and the Bolewura were neck-stacked in power struggle, their supporters or beneficiaries picked up arms against each other. The

central government has been apt in nipping the escalation of the conflict at the bud but there have been pockets of violent attacks within the Bole Township, resulting in loss of lives and property, breaking down of trust among families and between chieftaincy gates and displacement of people. Development has also been stifled as investors have fled and new ones are scared to come. Resources that would have been used for development were channeled into de-escalation and prevention of violent outbreaks of the conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the long run, there must be concerted efforts by the central government and all stake holders to address the conflict and find a long-lasting solution to the chieftaincy succession disputes that has engulfed the Bole Traditional Area and the entire Gonja Kingdom. The Ministry for Chieftaincy and Culture, as well as Local Government and Rural Development, should liaise with the National and Regional Houses of Chiefs in order to ensure that chiefs are well resourced so that they can take initiatives that will diversify their income bases. This could curb the alleged incidences where chiefs are said to be taking bribes as conditions for performing their duties or allow monetary benefits to cloud their sense of judgment in the execution of their duties.

The Gonja Traditional Council, its elites, ordinary sons and daughters should reiterate the need to follow the guidelines for appointing chiefs as provided for in the 1930 constitution. The constitution may be reviewed if there is the need. This would make it impossible for any chief to act outside the powers conferred on him by the constitution. This could resolve the phenomenon of duality of authorities and their adverse repercussions in the Bole Traditional Area and Gonjaland at large.

Again, there is the need for government, political parties, the Bole District Assembly and all stakeholders to demonstrate a high sense of morality by refraining from the exploitation of ethnic sentiments for electoral gains, empower the Regional House of Chiefs or the National House of Chiefs to lead mediations on resolving the conflict and reduce the role and power of the chief, so that calculated risk of perpetuating chieftaincy violence will become greater than their "ay-off".

The Ministries of Local Government and Rural Development, as well as the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture should liaise with the Commission for Civic Education to educate all chiefs and their subjects on the Constitutional provision on the separation of the institution of chieftaincy from partisan politics. They should be reminded of the critical role that the chieftaincy institution plays in the Ghanaian society thus, the need for chiefs to remain neutral and non-partisan.

A win-win approach of dispute resolution should be applied in the resolution of chieftaincy disputes such that the loser in a chieftaincy dispute is given well recognised chieftaincy title that would keep him in a respected position in the winner's administration since they are all from the same royal gate. This would not just bring peace, but unite the supporters of the two so that there would be no such divisions which currently exist in Bole and affecting the social coherence of the people Bole Traditional Area and the Gonja Kingdom as a whole.

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