



## Graduate School of Development Studies

Blending Formal and Informal Institutions? The Role of Female Traditional Leaders/Queen Mothers in 'Formal' Governance in Ghana

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## ***Dedication***

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## List of Acronyms

AAG	Affirmative Action Guidelines
CEDPA	Centre for Development and Population Activities
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CG	Central Government
CPP	Convention People's Party
CR	Colonial Rule
CRC	Constitutional Review Commission
FG	Formal Governance
FTL	Female Traditional Leader
GR	Gender Relations
HI	Historical Institutionalism
IDEA	Institute of Democratic and Electoral Assistance
IFG	Informal Governance
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LG	Local Government
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MKQMA	Manya Krobo Queen Mothers Association
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NAO	Native Administrative Ordinance
NEC	Non Elected Councillors
NHC	National House of House
NJO	Native Jurisdiction Ordinance
PLWHA	People Living With HIV/AIDS
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
RHC	Regional Houses of Chiefs
TAs	Traditional Authorities
TC	Traditional Council
QM	Queen Mother
QMA	Queen Mothers Association
QS	Quota System
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UU-UNO	Utilitarian Universalist-United Nations Office
WB	World Bank
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

## Abstract

Generally, Female Traditional Leaders(FTLs), also known as Queen Mothers (QMs) have historically occupied an important status and played active role in the Informal Governance (IFG) system in the Ghanaian society. But following the advent of colonialism and the creation of the modern state, the QMs were neglected in the Formal Governance (FG) system, leading to a consequent decline in their role. Meanwhile, recent dynamics have seen a revival of queenship in several areas across the country. But, despite the global and national efforts to empower women in governance; the QMs are still sidelined in the mainstream of FG. The objective of this research was therefore to trace the status and role of these QMs over time and to identify the main factors that led to the general decline in their role over the years. It brings out the dynamics, constraints and the factors contributing to the dis-empowerment of the QMs but also ask the question as to whether there are forces and initiatives to support QMs with a view to enable them play an important role in both the formal and informal realms of governance in present day Ghana. This paper frames their role in terms of gender, institutions and women's empowerment. The findings indicate that while the role of the QMs' has declined over time, they still play some relatively active role in Ghana. It also suggest that the deliberate neglect and exclusion of these QMs within the initial institutional set up by the British colonial regime coupled with subsequent forces of male power and subordination, account for the decline in their role over the years. The findings again point to both internal and external forces as providing the impetus for the recent dynamics that has seen the rejuvenation of queenship in the Ghanaian society today, with progressive calls for their representation in the institutions of governance. However, the study finally produced fairly lack of detailed evidence to support the hypothesis that the QMs' inclusion in the institutions of FG could generally enhance women's substantive representation in FG in Ghana.

## Relevance to Development Studies

There is the increasing realisation the world over, that women's representation in governance has become the *sine qua non* for building an equitable society, necessary for promoting sustainable and all-inclusive development. But generally, QMs in Ghana have historically played and presently continue to play a relatively active role in the IFG process in Ghana. This notwithstanding, they have been long neglected in the FG system. This paper therefore traces the declining status and role of these QMs over time with a view to enhancing their role in both the formal and informal systems of governance; and it is against this background, that I find the subject matter of this present study relevant to the field of development studies.

**Key words:** Gender and Gender Relations, Patriarchy, Formal and Informal Institutions of Governance, political representation

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

*'The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.'*<sup>1</sup>

[Universal Declaration on Democracy, Sept. 15, 1997]

There is little controversy over the fact the representation of women in governance is essential for enhancing democracy and all-inclusive development, in view of the fact that women constitute about half the population of the globe. However, in most societies the world over, women have for long remained on the fringes when it comes to governance and political decision making (Gyimah 2008; Agbalajobi 2010; IPU 2011 etc.) even on issues that directly affect their lives.

Statistics from the IPU (2011)<sup>2</sup> indicate that women currently hold merely 19.5% of the world's parliamentary seats. In Ghana, more than fifty percent (50%) of the population are women<sup>3</sup>; nonetheless, they constitute an insignificant eight (8%) of the 230 parliamentarians<sup>4</sup> in the legislature in Ghana and only 412 of the 17, 315 elected councillors in the assemblies across the country after the 2010 local government elections.<sup>5</sup>

In light of the overwhelming gender disparities in political representation, the idea of getting women in to the mainstream of political decision making, has become one of the topical issues in the international development agenda especially, following the adoption of the Beijing 'Platform for Action'<sup>6</sup> in 1995. According to Allah-Mensah (2005) the current emphasis on women's political representation is the result of the perceived and acknowledged contribution of women to the processes of democratic governance in many countries across the world (see also the UNSCR (1325) 2000; Commonwealth Secretariat 2005). The WB and other donor agencies have particularly seen women's representation in governance as an essential

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/108-1.htm> (Accessed on July 30, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Available: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> (Accessed: 28-04-2012)

<sup>3</sup> Provisional results of the 2010 Population and Housing Census by the Ghana Statistical Service put the figure at 51.3% (available at: [www.ghana.gov.gh](http://www.ghana.gov.gh), accessed, 13-11-11),

<sup>4</sup> [www.quotaproject.org/](http://www.quotaproject.org/) (accessed 20-04-2012)

<sup>5</sup> <http://allafrica.com/stories/201103211209.html> (21-04-2012)

<sup>6</sup> The Beijing 'Platform for Action' is an agenda for women's empowerment, which aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. It also seeks to eliminate all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. For more information, see:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#statement> (accessed on 22-01-2012):

element for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which many countries (including Ghana) have committed themselves.

Along the lines of this ambitious but also arduous global agenda to promote the representation of women in governance, Ghana has taken some bold steps, especially since independence to increase the visibility of women in the governance structures of the country both at the national and the Local Government (LG) level. Notable among them was the introduction of the Quota System (QS) in 1960 and also the adoption of the Affirmative Action Guidelines (AAG) in 1998.

However, while these efforts undoubtedly constitute a positive trend towards ensuring that women have a stake in governance, the present study takes as a point of departure the implicitly exclusionary and limited focus of the initiatives to enhance the representation of women in the governance process in Ghana. It fails to pay attention to one specific group women traditional leaders who have played active roles in governance in Ghana during the pre-colonial era—the so called Queen Mothers (QMs).<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, prior to colonialism, the traditional governance in Ghana, like in many other African societies was not an entirely men's affair and still not so. In fact, Agorsah (1990:77) has observed in the 1990s that, 'in discussions of African politics, there is a tendency to put so much emphasis on important offices held by men, that women appear to have little involvement.' He suggests that this erroneous impression deserves to be corrected because history indicates that the governance and development of any traditional society has been anchored on the activities of women.

Different studies have shown that formal governance systems which were transplanted in Africa by the colonial powers came to meet a pre-existing system of traditional governance; in which women were already involved as active agents (for example see Stoeltje 1997; Nketia 2005; Steegstra 2009). Of particular interest to this present study however, is the role played by the QMs. According to Stoeltje (1997) the office of the QM was an autonomous female sphere of political influence, and this institution has managed to survive up till now, despite the vicissitudes of the prolonged colonial and post-colonial neglect and threat of extinction (Manuh 1988; Stoeltje 2003; Odotei 2006). Stoeltje (1997:46) has noted that despite the enormous diversity of the social and political organization of African societies, 'the majority operate with the principle of a "dual-sex" political system through which the sexes pursue their

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term Queen Mothers and Female Traditional Leaders interchangeably in this study. According to Steegstra (2009) the term QM is a colonial concept, which was used by Rattray (1923) as a translation for the Twi<sup>7</sup> word *obemaa*<sup>7</sup>. Steegstra (2009: 107, citing Sackey 1989) further clarifies that; the term *queen mother* does not denote the actual mother of a king or chief, as in Europe: an Asante's queen mother is from the same lineage as the chief; she can be his actual mother, but usually she is his sister or cousin. Scholars such as Brydon (1996) also used the term 'women chiefs' to refer to QMs in her work on female traditional leaders in Avatime in the Volta region of Ghana; while Boateng (1992) also employs the concept of 'stool mother' to refer to QMs. But it must be noted however that, none of these concepts is more appropriate than the others; though some might have its own normative weaknesses (especially see Brydon 1996).

political and religious interests and which provide for individual female leadership.' (see also Tamale 2000).

According to Agyei-Mensah (2008) QMs in the Ghanaian society were considered as role models to young females; and they also acted as agents of mobilisation of the womenfolk for development purposes in their communities (see also NORSAAC 2009)<sup>8</sup>. However, since the advent of colonialism, the status and role of the QMs witnessed a continued decline over the years. But, recent dynamics in Ghana points to possibilities of their re-emergence. Of late, there are Queen Mothers Associations (QMAs) across the seven regions of southern Ghana and the institution of Queenship which was previously typical of the southern ethnic groups, is gradually been adopted by some ethnic groups in the northern part of the country in to their chiefship systems.<sup>9</sup>

It is therefore against this backdrop, that the present research aimed to uncover the factors leading to the decline in the role of the QMs and to assess whether, and what is being done to empower them with a view to re-open spaces that would allow for their representation in the formal governance systems of the post-colonial state of Ghana.

## 1.2 Statement of the research problem

Since independence in 1957, several efforts have been made in Ghana to bridge the gender gap in political representation both at the national and the LG levels. These efforts particularly became necessary following the advent of decentralisation in the late 1980s, in light of the abysmally low representation of women in the LG structures across the country (Gyimah 2008).

In 1960, Ghana was noted as the first African country to use the QS to elect women in to the Legislative Assembly, following the passage of the Representation of People's (Women Member's) Amendment Bill of 1960 by the then CPP administration, which allowed for the nomination and election of ten (10) women<sup>10</sup> in to the National Assembly (Sam 2010).<sup>11</sup>

In 1998, the government again came out with the Affirmative Action Guidelines, under the broader framework of the decentralisation programme (started in 1988) by which 30% of Non-Elected Councillors (NEC) in the assemblies was reserved for women (Ofei-Aboagye 2000; Gyimah 2008). This was followed in January 2001 by the establishment of the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) basically to coordinate national responses in

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<sup>8</sup> Northern Sector Action Awareness Centre (NORSAAC)

<sup>9</sup> <http://vibeghana.com/2012/04/29/queen-mother-concept-to-boost-womens-empowerment-asudev/> (Accessed: June 25, 2012)

<sup>10</sup> The 10 women elected in 1960 included: Ashanti Region – Comfort Asamoah; Brong Ahafo Region – Lucy Anin; Eastern Region – Sophia Doku, Mary Koranteng; Northern Region - Susanna Al-Hassan, Ayanori Bukari, Victoria Nyarko; Volta Region – Regina Asamany; Western Region – Grace Ayensu, Christiana Wilmot(see Sam 2010: 5)

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately however, the 'quota system' was later abandoned after the overthrow of the CPP administration. But currently advocacy for the reintroduction of the quota system is raging with several organisations and personalities (including the current speaker of Ghana's Parliament, Madam Joyce Bamford Addo) supporting the call.  
(see <http://politics.myjoyonline.com/pages/parliament/201111/77339.php> (access on April 7, 2012)

addressing the marginal role of women in governance and development.<sup>12</sup> The country has further ratified a number of international treaties and conventions as a demonstration of its commitment to enhancing women's position in governance (Manuh 2007).<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, what appears to receive less attention, in all these efforts to promote women's representation in governance in Ghana over the years, is a focus on the informal/traditional realm of governance. Historically, QMs have been active agents in governance in the traditional Ghanaian society (Agorsah 1990, Stoeltje 1997, 2003). Apart from mobilising the womenfolk to partake in development projects, the QM among the Akans<sup>14</sup> was responsible among others, for selecting and also advising the chief, overseeing the welfare of women in their specific communities and also settles disputes and resolve conflicts, particularly those involving women (Akutsu 1992, Boaten 1992).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, during the colonial era, some QMs were very instrumental in the struggles to relief Ghana from the shackles of colonial bondage (Brydon 1996; Kreitzer 2005).<sup>16</sup>

But, it needs to be noted that, in Ghana the QMs unlike the male chiefs have been and are still sidelined within the formal governance systems and even now are denied representation in the various Houses of Chiefs across the country (Von Struensee 2004; Steegstra 2009) even though the constitution of Ghana recognises them as chiefs.<sup>17</sup> Evidence has also shown that the QMs don not benefit from the thirty percent (30%) quota of the NEC reserved for women in the assemblies, since the women appointed normally turn out to be sympathisers of the political party in government (Wuripe 2010).

However, it is undeniable, that the QMs still enjoy some amount of legitimacy in their communities even today, especially among women, and their representation in the FG structures could well be one significant entry point for empowering women and promoting their substantive representation in the FG institutions in Ghana .

### 1.3 Objective of the study

The study has three main objectives. First, it seeks to uncover the past and contemporary role and relevance of the institution of the FTLs in the Ghanaian society. Secondly, it intends to identify the factors responsible for

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<sup>12</sup> The MOWAC was established by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) administration by Executive Instrument (EI 8). For more about the mission and mandate of the Ministry see: <http://www.mowacghana.net/> (accessed on November 12 , 2011)

<sup>13</sup> These include: CEDAW; The African Union (AU) Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality 2003; The African Charter Protocol on Women's Rights 2003; The Beijing Platform for Action 1995 MDG's etc.

<sup>14</sup> The Akan is the largest ethnic group in Ghana, constituting almost half (about 49%) of the total population (see Langer and Ukiwo 2007).

<sup>15</sup> See also <http://allafrica.com/stories/201105140002.html> (Accessed: 28-04-2012)

<sup>16</sup> For instance, *Yaa Asantewaa* Queen mother of Ejisu in the Ashanti region of Ghana has been noted for her high profile role in the fight against the British in the famous *Yaa Asantewaa War* in 1900.

<sup>17</sup> Media sources indicate that the government in 2011 announced the inclusion of 20 QMs in the NHC but the directive is yet to be implemented by the all-male House of Chiefs. According to the president of NHC, the proposal for legal reform that would allow for their inclusion is still before the CRC

the general decline in the role of these FTLs in Ghana over the years. It finally assesses the constraints faced by the FTLs today; and whether something has been/currently being done with a view to empowering them in both the formal and informal spheres.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

The main question that this study seeks to answer is: what factors account for the decline in the role of FTLs in Ghana despite the fact that efforts are been made since independence, to generally enhance the role of women in FG governance in Ghana. Though the 1992 Constitution of the republic of Ghana debar traditional leaders including Chiefs and QMs from taking part in 'active' party politics; it does not preclude them from holding certain appointed positions in the formal institutions of state, such as the Council of State<sup>18</sup>, the governing bodies of certain public boards and co-operations like the Lands Commission<sup>19</sup> as well as the assemblies. But, in most cases, it is the male Chiefs who have been the focus of attention and of continued power, with the assumption that they would represent the perspectives of both the male and female traditional rulers. However, this situation is worrying, in view of the fact that the male chiefs may well be unable to better to understand and share the perspective, interest and aspirations of the QMs and the women in Ghana as a whole.

The study would also be guided by the following specific research questions:

1. What was the historic position and what has been the cotemporary position and role of FTLs in governance in Ghana?
2. What factors account for the decline in the position and role of female traditional leaders in the FG systems of the colonial and post-colonial state of Ghana?
3. What are the constraints faced by the QMs today, and are steps taken to empower them with a view to them playing an important role in FG in Ghana?

#### **1.5 The research methodology**

In order to effectively address the research questions in this study, I have drawn convincing evidence mainly from secondary data sources. I undertook a critical review and analysis of books, journal articles, news items, reports as well as data from internet sources. Additionally, other empirical evidences such as pictures have been used, where necessary to elucidate my arguments in this study.

The option to rely principally on secondary data sources is necessitated by the fact that the author is on a fast track double degree programme and has relatively limited time period within which to carry out this research. Therefore doing field data collection appeared practically impossible under the circumstances.

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<sup>18</sup> The Council of State is the principal Advisory body to the President under the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

<sup>19</sup> A body responsible for the overseeing the administration of Lands and Natural resources of Ghana

### 1.5.1 The scope of the research

This research focused mainly on the institution of QMs among the ethnic groups in the seven regions of southern Ghana<sup>20</sup> (see map in Figure 1 in Appendix 3). However, comparative evidence has been drawn from pre-colonial Nigeria to better inform the analysis on the historic role QMs and women in general in the traditional African society. However, the choice to focus basically on the QMs in southern Ghana is informed by the fact that the institution of queenship is peculiar to the chieftaincy systems among the southern ethnic groups, and the three northern regions of Ghana only started very recently to adopt it in to their traditional political systems (*as demonstrated in Figure 1 Appendix 3*).<sup>21</sup>

However, it must be stated at the outset, that the purpose of this research is not to measure the power of women as against that of men. It does not also intend to delve in to the long and murky debates about the origins of chiefship in Ghana or among the numerous southern ethnic groups. The intention here is to assess and widen the scope of women's contribution in governance by drawing attention to the role of QMs in the informal sphere of governance. The study argues for the recognition of the historic and contemporary role of QMs in the formal institutions of governance in Ghana.

### 1.6 Relevance and Justification

This study has both theoretical and policy relevance in the distinctive field of governance. As already argued, it intends to focus on a largely ignored but a quite promising arena of women's 'substantive representation'<sup>22</sup> in governance in Ghana. Therefore, it is hoped that it would draw the attention of the government, non-governmental organisations, political parties, the international community and other donor agencies working to promote the course of women in political governance, to the limited horizon of the various Affirmative Action initiatives in Ghana. The research hopes to expose the limited focus of current efforts to empower women in governance, which tend to focus largely on the elective position of councillors and members of parliaments to the neglect of the pre-existing female traditional political institutions. In addition, this also forms a significant addition to the already existing literature in the field; and also provides a very useful source of reference for future research, especially within the Ghanaian and the wider African context.

### 1.7 Limitation of the study

I encountered two major limitations in this study. First, there was a very short time period within which this research was supposed to be conducted.

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<sup>20</sup> For the purpose of this study southern Ghana is defined to include all the regions except the three northern regions, namely; Upper East, Upper West and the Northern Regions

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.ghananewsagency.org/details/Features/Northern-Traditional-Councils-Role-of-Queen-Mothers/?ci=10&ai=31994> (August 5, 2012)

<sup>22</sup> Pitkin distinguishes between 'descriptive representation' (one based on the politically relevant characteristics of the represented community and 'substantive representation' that is, representation that reflects the interests and aspirations of those represented. (cf. Bratton an Ray 2002)

Ordinarily the intention was to undertake primary data collection, but given the fact that I am on a fast track double degree programme and has to submit the paper earlier, doing field research proved to be a less feasible option; and that informed the decision to resort to the use of secondary data sources.

The second limitation was the absence of previous research on the very latest dynamics in the institution of queenship in Ghana. These developments are quite recent and media sources and news items became the only avenue of retrieving information regarding those issues.

## Chapter 2

### General conceptual and theoretical framework

#### 2.0 Introduction

The chapter examines the theories and concepts that have been deployed in this study. First, it presents the two theoretical perspectives adopted to facilitate subsequent discussion and analysis in this paper, namely; the HI perspective and the theory of gender and power develop by Robert Connell. And secondly, it elucidates on the key concepts such as political representation, gender and gender relations, patriarchy, and the concepts of formal and informal institutions of governance.

#### 2.1 Historical Institutionalism (HI)

The use of the term institutions in the social sciences has become widespread, yet scholars still remain less unanimous regarding the definition of this very concept (Hogson 2006). However, according to North (1990:3) institutions are simply 'the rules of the game or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction'. Steinmo (2008) has noted that whereas some students of institutionalism place emphasis on formal rules and organisations others focus on informal rules and norms. But, he notes that irrespective of how institutions are viewed, they remain relevant for politics 'because they shape who participates in a given decision and, simultaneously, their strategic behaviour' (Steinmo 2008: 159).

The HI perspective argues that 'once constructed at a moment in history, institutions typically endure for significant periods of time, influencing political dynamics and associated outcomes in subsequent periods' (Lieberman 2001:1012). According to Lieberman (2001: 1012) the HI literature defines institutions as the 'formal organizations and the informal but widely accepted rules of conduct that structure a decision-making or political process.' The theory underscores the role of past events or initial conditions in shaping the trajectory of future institutional development. It suggests that, policy choices made when an institution is being formed or when a policy is initiated follow patterns that normally persist over time (Lieberman 2001; Steinmo 2008).

It conceptualises the development of political institutions as regularized patterns and routinized practices, which are subject to the 'logic of path-dependence (Schmidt 2010). However, this does not imply that change does not exist in this theoretical tradition, but the theory suggests that the range of possibilities for this to happen is normally constrained by the formative period of the institution or policy. In explaining institutional creation and change over time, HI scholars employ among others the notion of crisis (Krasner 1984). Krasner (1984) has argued that:

New structures originate during periods of crisis. They may be imposed through conquest or be implanted by a particular fragment of the existing social structure. But once institutions are in place they can assume a life of their own, extracting societal resources, socializing individuals, and even altering the basic nature of civil society itself.

The HI perspective is often criticised for a number of weaknesses; paramount among which is the charge of determinism. However, its recognition of the important place of the past as well as initial conditions and institutions in shaping future norms, values and structures, underlie its usefulness for my analysis in this paper.

## 2.2 Cornell's perspective on gender and power

The theory of gender and power developed by Robert Connell is a social structural theory based on existing philosophical writings of sexual inequality as well as gender and power imbalance (Wingood and DiClemente 2000). The central argument of the Connell's theory is that, there are three major structures that characterize the gendered relationships between men and women: 'the sexual division of labour, the sexual division of power, and the structure of cathexis' (Wingood and DiClemente 2000: 539).

For Connell, the three overlapping but distinct structures serve to explain the cultural bound gender roles assumed by men and women. Connell emphasised that the three structures are interdependent and there is no single structure from which the others are derived. He further suggests that the three structures exist at two different levels: the societal and the institutional (cited in Wingood and DiClemente 2000). Of much interest here is the conceptualisation of these structures at the societal level. At this level, they are rooted in society through 'numerous abstract, historical, and socio-political forces that consistently segregate power and ascribe social norms on the basis of gender-determined roles' (Wingood and DiClemente (2000:540).

According to the theory, sexual division of power begins at the societal level with the unequal division of power between men and women. And this is maintained at the institutional level by social mechanisms such as the abuse of authority and control in relationships. It argues that women in power imbalanced relationships tend to live at the mercy of their male partners because men usually bring more financial resources in to the relationship.

At the societal level, the sexual division of labour refers to the allocation of women and men to certain occupations. But the theory contends that, more often than not women are assigned different and unequal positions relative to men. Besides, at the institutional level women are often delegated the responsibility of "women's work" such as caring for the sick and the aged, childbearing and housework which are mostly uncompensated. And these kinds of work hinder their economic potential and limit their career paths.

The final dimension is the structure of cathexis, which Wingood and DiClemente (2002) call the structure of affective attachments and social norms. Wingood and DiClemente (2002:544) suggest that at the societal level, the structure of cathexis sets out appropriate sexual behaviour for women; which is 'characterized by the emotional and sexual attachments that women have with men'. More importantly, 'it describes how women's sexuality is attached to other social concerns, such as those related to impurity and immorality'.

## 2.3 Analytical concepts

### 2.3.1 *Formal and Informal Institutions of Governance*

The boundaries between formal and informal institutions of governance can be quite blurred as the two sometimes overlaps. Besides, scholars have given

diverse interpretations to these concepts. According to Bratton (2007:97) *formal Institutions* are ‘the organized routines of political democracy, such as regular elections for top officeholders and legal constraints on the political executive’, whereas *informal institutions* denote ‘the patterns of patron-client relations by which power is also exercised.’

However, this paper adopts Kendie and Guri’s conceptualisation of formal and informal Institutions of governance, which they call the traditional and the national structures of governance. Traditional/informal institutions comprise ‘all the structures, systems and processes that communities have evolved in the course of their history and development to govern them’ (Kendie and Guri: 337). It is the ‘structures and units of organisation in a community and encompasses the norms, values, beliefs and cosmovision that guide social interaction’ (Kendie and Guri: 333). The authors distinguish this from formal or what they refer to as ‘national governance authorities’. According to Kendie and Guri, the latter refer to the institutions which are the creations of the modern state. Appropriate for my understanding here is the component of the informal/traditional institutions the authors term as the traditional ‘leadership institutions.’ Kendie and Guri note that the typical traditional leadership institutions in southern Ghana comprise of the ‘chiefs, Queen Mothers, male and female youth leaders, clan heads and elders.’ The paper concerns itself with the chiefs and QMs.

In this sense, national institutions of state established by statute including the houses of chiefs and TCs which are established under the Chieftaincy Act 1971 (Act 370) are considered formal institutions of governance under this study. Therefore, the male chiefs in this respect could be considered as operating in both the formal and informal spheres of governance in Ghana.

### **2.3.2 *Women’s Empowerment***

The term empowerment is one of the pervasive but highly debated concepts in feminist circles. Different writers have offered diverse definitions for the concept. Chamberlin (1997:2) defines empowerment in terms of three main things, namely; ‘having decision-making power, having access to information and resources, and having a range of options from which to make choices.’

In a brilliant analysis, Kabeer (2005) similarly views empowerment in terms of the ability to make choices. Hence, she argues that, to be disempowered implies that one is been denied a choice. However, Kabeer further contends that, one can only be empowered, if you were disempowered in the first place. As she clearly puts it:

....empowerment....is inescapably bound up with the condition of disempowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. In other words, empowerment entails a process of change (Kabeer 2005: 437).

Kabeer’s definition is suitable for our analysis here in view of the fact that we are dealing with a category of women who are believed to be historically powerful, but currently perceived to be disempowered as a result of the forces and circumstances of societal change.

Kabeer (2005) also suggests that the capacity to make a choice could be considered in three inter-related dimensional ways, namely; resources (pre-conditions), agency (process), and achievements (outcomes). First, the resources according to Kabeer (2005:437) include both the material resources and in a broader sense 'the various human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice', such as the norms and rules that govern the distribution of resources in society. Agency on the other hand, goes beyond observable action to encompass the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or 'the power within' (Kabeer 2005: 438). The achievement of empowerment is about reversing the relations of power between men and women in society. Building on Lukes (1974, cited in Batliwala 2007:559) focus on 'institutional *power over* agenda and discussions' Kabeer (1994, cited in Batliwala 2007) further argued that empowerment also entails conscientizing women to understand and challenge gender inequality in the home as well as the community-the *power with*. Similarly, Batliwala (2007:559) has also noted that empowerment is a 'socio-political process' which involves efforts to shift the 'political, social, and economic power between and across both individuals and social groups.'

Finally, she concludes that the resources and agency sums up to what Sen (1985b) terms as capabilities. That is, the potential that a person has to live the life he/she wants, or to achieve his/her 'functioning'.

### **2.3.3 *Political representation***

Representation remains one of the widely used terms in the literature on governance, yet it is still subject to several interpretations and its content and utility has been highly contested. For instance, there have been questions as to: who represents who and with what authority? Also questions as to whether representation really translates in to better policies that reflect the aspirations of the ordinary people.

However, Pitkin has made a very useful distinction between what she terms 'descriptive' and 'substantive' representation. According to Pitkin (cited in Bratton and Ray 2002:428) a "descriptively" representative body is one that mirrors the (politically relevant) characteristics of the represented community such as sex, age or ethnic background; while a "substantively" representative body is one that reflects the interests of the community that it represents. This paper adopts Pitkin's concept of 'substantive representation' in analysing the issue of the QMs in Ghana. This is because the rationale behind the advocacy for gender diversity within institutions of governance in this study is the belief that the QMs will bring a different set of attitudes, interests, and priorities to policy making and that they are more likely than the male chiefs to understand and generally pursue the interest of women (cf. Norris 1996, cited in Bratton and Ray 2002).

### **2.3.4 *Gender, gender relations (GR) and patriarchy***

There is the risk to confuse gender with sex. Therefore, in an attempt to define gender, it makes analytical sense to contrast it with sex. According to Holmes (2007) sex is the natural biological differences between males and females. In

other words, sex is given and normally acquired at birth. Gender on the other hand is not natural, but a social construction. This paper adopts the definition of gender by Holmes (2007:18) who defines it as the ‘socially produced difference between being feminine and masculine’. In other words, gender is the social construction of the differences between men and women. This definition is useful because it would allow us to understand how certain social construction about the position/roles of QMs as women in particular, affects their role in the public sphere in the Ghanaian traditional society.

Following from the above definition of gender, GR could therefore be understood generally, as the socially constructed relations between men and women. Bravo-Baumann (2000) defines GR as the ways in which a culture or society defines the rights, responsibilities, as well as the identities of men and women in relation to one another. But, in this study I conceptualise gender relations in relation to Agarwal (1997:1) who defines the concept as a complex relationship involving ‘relations of power between women and men’. She notes that the complexities of gender relations:

....are revealed not only in the division of labour and resources between women and men, but also in ideas and representations— the ascribing to women and men of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behaviour patterns, and so on. (Agarwal 1997:1)

Agarwal noted that GR are often not neutral, as it sometimes involves issues of power and also embedded in both the material and ideological.

Finally, the term *patriarchy* has also become indispensable in the analysis of GR (Walby 1989). Patriarchy as a concept has historically been employed by social scientists such as Weber (1947; cited in Walby 1989: 214) who used it to denote ‘a system of government in which men ruled societies through their position as heads of households.’ However, here I adopt the definition of Walby (1989:214) who sees patriarchy as: ‘...a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.’ Her definition is helpful here because, as she rightly argues, the use of the term social structures implies a rejection of both biological determinism, and the essentialist notion that all male chiefs are in a dominant position and every QM is subordinate.

# Chapter 3

## Politics, Governance/Administration and Traditional Political Institutions in Ghana

### 3.0 Introduction

The chapter undertakes a critical review of the relevant literature on the topic of this paper. It begins with a brief historical background of politics in Ghana dating back to the beginning of the colonial era. The second section gives a highlight on the nature of governance and administration in the post-colonial state of Ghana; while the third examines the status and role of FTLs in West Africa prior to colonialism and the modern state system by drawing comparative evidence from Nigeria. The chapter also looks at the Indirect Rule System (IRS) which was adopted by the British during the colonial era and the role played by the male chiefs under it. Finally it gives an overview the place of traditional rulers in the post-colonial state of Ghana, with a focus on the current position and role of QMs in the formal systems of governance.

#### 3.1 A brief political history of Ghana<sup>23</sup>

Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) was colonised by the British, though the Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in the Gold Coast in 1471. The Dutch, Danish, Prussians and Swedish and the British arrived later. But they all initially came mainly for purposes of commerce. However, following the departure of the other European countries the British decided to establish political authority over the Gold Coast. In 1874 southern Ghana was formally declared a British protectorate.<sup>24</sup> And after series of wars and conquests, the entire Gold Coast was brought under British control in 1902, following the final defeat of the Asantes in the Yaa Asantewaa War<sup>25</sup>. The British thereafter introduced the formal structures of political governance namely; the executive council, the legislative council, as well as the provincial and town councils. These western structures of governance later came to supersede the traditional political institutions that existed prior to colonialism in Ghana.

In 1957 Ghana attained political independence after almost half a century of British colonial rule; and became a republic in 1960. After independence, the country experienced intermittent coup d'états in 1966, 1972, 1979 and again 1981 (Abdulai 2009). However, after returning to civilian rule in 1992, Ghana has since enjoyed considerable peace and political stability.

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<sup>23</sup> Much of the information on the pre-colonial and colonial history of Ghana is drawn from the following links respectively:  
<http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ad43>

(Accessed on July 15, 2012)

<sup>24</sup> [http://ghanadistricts.com/home/?\\_s=49&s=4768&ss=780](http://ghanadistricts.com/home/?_s=49&s=4768&ss=780)

<sup>25</sup> Named after the Asante Queen Mother of Ejisu, who led the Asantes in this famous war.

### **3.2 Nature of governance/administration in Ghana**

Ghana is a unitary state with an executive presidency. The president as the head of state works with the support of Cabinet and the Council of State (CoS) which among other agencies are the principal advisory bodies to the president on national policy and planning (Constitution of Ghana 1992). The powers of the executive are held in check by the legislature and the judiciary, as the three arms of government operate on the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances. Administratively, the country is divided into ten (10) regions as part of the decentralisation process in Ghana (LG Act (462) 1993). Governance under the regions is comprised of the Regional Coordinating Councils and a four-tier Metropolitan and three-tier Municipal/District Assemblies. These constitute the local governance (LG) structures in Ghana.<sup>26</sup>

However, the formal institutions of governance operate alongside the indigenous institutions of chiefs and QMs (Abotsi and Galizzi 2011). Since the colonial era these indigenous institutions have been co-opted into the formal institutions through the establishment of National and Regional Houses of Chiefs as well as the traditional councils under the Chieftaincy Act 1971 (Act 370). The chiefs are given representation in the CoS, the Lands Commission<sup>27</sup> and the assemblies across the country (Constitution of Ghana 1992).

### **3.3 General socio-economic status of women in Ghana**

Generally, the constitution of Ghana accords women equal status as men. Article 17 (1&2) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana respectively, guarantees the equality of all persons and also prohibits all forms of discrimination against any manner of person(s). In addition, the laws also afford women and men equal access to education, employment and health as well as equal opportunity to participate in political and social activities (Coker-Appiah and Foster 2002). In effect, there is no law that disadvantages women in any sphere of life. However, the realities are quite different. Despite the fact that there has been improvement in the literacy rate among women over the years, Coker-Appiah and Foster (2002) have shown that the literacy rate for men is 60% as opposed to 30% for women. The recent Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS 5) (2008:iv) also indicates that 'a little over 6 out of every 10 men, but only 4 out of every 10 women are literate.'

Regarding women's economic status, even though women are among the economically active population, they are mostly employed in the informal sector such as petty trading and subsistence agriculture (*see table 1*). Amu (2005:27) reveals that 'rural women are responsible for about 80% of food produced in Ghana, which contribute about 48% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP),' yet these contributions are normally undervalued/excluded in the national income accounting system (Amu 2005). Besides, women compared to men have limited access to credit, though women are reported to be better in loan repayment than men (World Bank 2000 cited in Amu 2005). Moreover, though more women are involved in agriculture, the land tenure system in Ghana largely puts land in the hands of men who are household heads in the typical Ghanaian society. It is therefore argued that women's

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<sup>26</sup> Under the Ghana Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462)

<sup>27</sup> The body in charge of the lands and natural resources of Ghana

‘unequal land rights affect their access to other resources and their economic, social and political status’ (The Women’s Manifesto 2005:17).

### 3.4 The status<sup>28</sup> of QMs in pre-colonial Ghana

Despite the widely held notion that African societies are largely patriarchal in nature, the evidence in many societies (including Ghana) suggests that the political system in Africa prior to the advent of colonialism and modern democratic governance did not entirely exclude women (see Aidoo 1985 Agorsah 1990, etc.).

Indeed, there were instances in which women occupied important positions and played relatively important roles in governance (see Stoeltje 2003, 1997; Brempong 2000; Agorsah 1990 etc.). For example, scholars like Agorsah (1990), and Stoeltje (1997) have asserted that, most African societies have a dual system of political organisation, in which there are clearly delineated functions for both men and women; where the men and women exercise parallel political powers. Caroline Bledsoe (1980, cited in Stoeltje 1997) noted this kind of parallelism in ritual authority in the study of Women in Kpelle society in Liberia. Similarly, Benetta Jules-Rosette (1994, cited in Stoeltje 1997) also highlights the mystical power of women through mediumship and ceremonial authority and indicates the complexity of the relationship between priests and priestesses. Also, writing on the QMs in the Kingdom of Dahomey in pre-colonial Nigeria (now Benin), Paula Ben-Amos (1983, cited in Stoeltje 1997) revealed that the QM of Benin wielded such a great power that she was recognised as one of the senior chiefs or Town Chiefs, and had her own palace and court.

In Ghana, there is some evidence to attest to the fact that QMs were active agents in societal governance prior to colonialism. However, it is important to point out that, the extent of their power and role might have varied from one society to another. Agorsah (1990; see also Stoeltje 1997) has noted, that in the Asante society, every political unit had not only a *chief* but also a QM, and it is almost impossible for one to exist without the other. Stoeltje (1997:43) further argued eloquently, in her study of the Asante QMs that:

Queen mothers of the Asante have their own stools. The stool in Asante symbolizes power and authority just as the throne does in European monarchies. Thus when it is said that a queen mother has her own stool, the reference is that she has her own power, that she holds her office on the basis of her own qualifications.

Certainly, while Stoeltje (1997), Bledsoe (1980) and the others do not by any shred of imagination suggest that men and women were/are equal and therefore exercised equal political powers in these societies; they nonetheless give us insight in to the position of women in the political system of these African societies and the relatively active roles they played in governance. In the following section, I outline the historic role of QMs in the pre-colonial West Africa, drawing comparative evidence from Ghana and Nigeria.

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<sup>28</sup> By ‘position’ I am simply referring to the amount of recognition and prestige accorded to QMs, while the role refers to the functions they perform in society.

### **3.5 The historic role of QMs in Ghana**

Historically, the female traditional leaders in Ghana have been noted to perform relatively important roles in the governance of the Ghanaian traditional society (see Stoeltje 2003, 1997; Brempong 2000; Agorsah 1990 etc.). These roles could range from the *spiritual* to the *secular* (Auwah-Nyamekye 2009).

#### **3.5.1 Performance of rituals**

First, in order to fulfil the responsibility of her stool, the queen mother like the male chief has to perform important rituals and should be present for many ceremonies, especially funerals. Their presence is particularly necessary for the funerals of other royals and prestigious members of the community. In effect, attendance at funerals constitutes one of the major ritual functions for QMs as funerals are important events for public display and also communal reunification (Stoeltje 1997)

#### **3.5.2 Rites of passage**

The QMs among the Akans of Ghana also played a very vital role at the individual's rites of passage where the QM was important to every young girl and her family. According to Stoeltje (1997) all young women were supposed to be brought to the queen mother for her to register them when they first begin to menstruate. She then ensures that the young girls were not pregnant, and then records their names in her registry. This practice was important because it was considered a disgrace for a young girl to become pregnant prior to the initiation rites and been publicly recognised as a woman. This was an effective traditional mechanism of social control against teenage pregnancy and a check on the girls' moral life (Stoeltje 1997).

#### **3.5.3 Selection of the Chief**

It was also the duty of QM to nominate the next chief for enstoolment. According to Auwah-Nyamekye (2009) in the process of selecting a Chief among the Asantes, the list of contenders was presented to the QM (*Ohemaa*) who then together with her elders did some screening. Auwah-Nyamekye (2009) reveals that, the screening was done both *physically* and *spiritually* through divination, in order to establish the rightful heir who would be acceptable to both the ancestors and the people.

#### **3.5.4 Care-taker upon the death of the Chief**

As in the “modern” state of Ghana where the Vice President automatically steps in the absence of the President, similarly, upon the death of the Chief, the QM among the Akans of Ghana automatically assumed the role of the Chief, until a new successor was selected. Agorsah (1990: 81) aptly puts it this way:

When a King has passed away among the Asante and has been laid in state, it is the Queen mother who becomes the regent and exercises the powers of the King until a successor has been elected and installed.

### **3.5.5 *Mobilising women for development***

Besides, the QM also mobilised the women under her jurisdiction to undertake activities geared towards the development of their communities such as public health education and clean-up exercises. As Stoeltje (1997) rightly points out, the QM has a duty to mobilise the community women from time to time for development purposes and also to clean-up their villages in order to cleanse it of evil.

### **3.5.6 *Settlement of disputes among women***

Another very important role of the queen mothers in the community was their authority to settle disputes involving women. A dispute arising between females and males, between two women or any form of domestic dispute that occurs in her area of jurisdiction can be attended to by the QM's court. Also, Stoeltje (1997) further asserts that even cases that were not related to domestic matters could also be heard in the queen mothers' courts and they were often preferred for addressing issues, because the fees were lower in a queen mother's court than in that of the male chief's court.

### **3.5.7 *The general welfare of the community***

Moreover, the QM was normally considered as the “mother” of the clan and of the entire village.<sup>29</sup> This implied that, she took care of the general welfare of the community including the chief himself. Stoeltje (1997: 58) has argued that, the QM, in her position as the mother of the clan and village:

....embodies knowledge and wisdom, and through her leadership she is expected to impart that wisdom to the chief and her people. This knowledge and wisdom, derived from the concept of mother, is what legitimates her authority and defines the functions of the queen mother.

According to Stoeltje (1997) one paramount chief of Offinso in the Ashanti region of Ghana also confirmed the indispensable role of the QM to the Asante Chiefs in a proverb by saying: ‘The King sucks the breast of the QM’ (Stoeltje 1997: 58).

### **3.5.8 *Advisor to the Chief***

Among the Akans of Ghana, the QM was one of the principal advisors of the Chief, apart from the Chief's Council of Elders. In fact, narrating the statement of one Akan paramount chief, Stoeltje (1997) recounted that the QM acted as the Advisor [to the chief] on secular affairs and also on matters of tradition and religion, insuring that taboos were not breached. According to Boaten (1992: 91) the QM was ‘the only personality among the courtiers who could openly advise the chief or even rebuke him. She had the responsibility to counsel the chief in the do's and don'ts of chiefship.’

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<sup>29</sup> However, the term ‘mother’ is only used by Stoeltje in a symbolic sense and does not imply biology. It does not also imply that ‘motherhood’ is the only legitimate sphere of the queen's public influence as some feminists might be made to think. However, ‘motherhood’ does form part of the bases of female power and authority, in the case of the Akan QMs of Ghana (see Stoeltje 1997).

### 3.5.9 The struggle against colonial rule in Ghana

Aside the conventional role of queen mothers, it is also important to point out that some of the QMs had equally played a tremendous role in pre-colonial politics of Ghana. The exceptional role of Yaa Asantewaa (one time QM of Ejisu) and Akyawaa Yikwan<sup>30</sup> cannot be rushed into oblivion in the annals of Ghanaian history. These were two famous FTLs who displayed extraordinary abilities by leading the men of their societies in the fight against colonial regime in Ghana. During the 1820's and 1830's, queen Akyawaa Yikwan<sup>31</sup> 'was a diplomat and negotiator in the Asante disputes with the British' (Brydon 1996: 230; cf. Kreitzer 2005). According to Brydon (1996:230) Queen Akyawaa particularly led the Asantes in the negotiation with the British during the treaty of 1831; in the wake of the disastrous battle of Katamanso<sup>32</sup>.

Similarly, in 1900, Yaa Asantewaa<sup>33</sup> also led the Asante army against the British in the fierce battle that later became known as the Yaa Asantewaa war (Kreitzer 2005). Therefore, from the above it could be argued that, unlike the queens in the West who are mostly ceremonial figureheads, the queen mothers of Ghana had a practical and more direct role in the governance of the traditional African society.

### 3.6 Comparative role of FTLs in pre-colonial Nigeria

The West African state of Nigeria presents a useful comparison with a view to understand and appreciate the historic role and the subsequent decline in the position of FTLs in Africa for two reasons. One is the fact that the two countries were both colonised by the British and secondly, they both had the experience of the IRS in which the British expediently co-opted the traditional institutions in to the Western systems of governance, under the rhetoric of indigenising the western forms of governance in the two countries.

Evidence exists about the important position and role of FTLs in several societies in pre-colonial Nigeria (see Fig. 2 in Appendix 2). Olupona (1991) in her study of the Ondo people reveals the power of women in Nigerian traditional society, through their ritual authority. According to Olupona, the Ondo male chiefs ruled alongside female chiefs (*Opoji*); and the paramount female chief (*Lobun* or *Obinrin*) is one of the most revered titles in Ondo. She notes that, during the selection of a new chief, the *Lobun* performed the last and main series of rituals which consisted of the actual investiture of the new *Qba* by the *Lobun* through which the former received the authority to exercise his rule over his subjects (Olupona 1991:320).

Staudt (1984) has also drawn our attention to the role of the *Iyalode* among the Yoruba and also the *Omwu* among the Igbo people in Nigeria. The *Iyalode* was a woman chief who was selected not based on hereditary but on her own personal qualities and achievements as a woman. The *Iyalode* served as the

<sup>30</sup> Akyawaa was a daughter to the Asantehene during the pre-colonial era and was also noted to be a wealthy and prosperous woman.

<sup>31</sup> She was also the daughter of the Asantehene(Paramount Chief of the Asante)

<sup>32</sup> This was one of the battles fought between the Asantes and the combined force of the British and all other ethnic groups in the coastal areas near a town called Dodowa (also known as Katamanso) in 1826. The Asantes had attempted to bring these ethnic groups under their control.

<sup>33</sup> Was the QM of Ejisu in the Ashanti region

spokesperson for the women and represented their interests on important issues and occasions such as opening of new markets and settlement of disputes (Staudt 1984). In addition, the *Iyalode*, like the *Omwu* presided over her own traditional council of women elected by her.

Similarly, among the Edo people in the pre-colonial Benin Kingdom of Nigeria, the power of the *Iyoba* (QM) was well noted by scholars. Unlike the *Obemaa* among Akan in Ghana the *Iyoba* was automatically the biological mother of the king. The first *Iyoba* of the Benin Kingdom was *Queen Idia*, who was mother of *Oba Esigie* (A.D. 1504 to 1550). *Queen Idia* was particularly noted for her power in mobilising thousands of army to fight the enemies of her son in order to sustain his rule. As a result of her instrumental role the *Queen Idia* had her own palace and court.

Historical records of ancient Zaria state in Nigeria also eulogise the efforts of women. For instance, Attoe (2002, cited in Olatunde 2010)<sup>34</sup> reveals that the city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. Queen Turuku was succeeded by her daughter Queen Amina after her demise. The latter, as many literatures as well as oral accounts suggest, was well known as a great and powerful warrior (Olatunde 2010). Reports has it that she won in many of the wars that she fought. It is further noted that among some of her prominent works, Queen Amina built a wall around Zaria and beyond to a nearby town called Bauchi; so as to protect the city from invasion. She was therefore generally said to have contributed immensely to turning Zaria into ‘not just an ordinary powerful city but also a prominent commercial centre;’ and in recognition for Queen Amina’s extraordinary achievements, inhabitants of the neighbouring towns of Kano and Kaduna paid tribute to her (Attoe, 2002, cited in Olatunde 2010: 20)

However, several writers have noted that the onset of colonialism constituted one of the major (but not the only) factors that have undermined the role of women and QMs in particular in the Nigerian society (Staudt 1984; Rojas 1994; Agbalajobi 2010; Olasupo and Fayomi 2012 etc.). According to Olatunde (2010) some analysts have describe the era of colonialism as the period of political inactivity for Nigerian women.

During the colonial era, the traditional leaders in Nigeria like the case of Ghana were actively co-opted in to the colonial governance structures under the so-called Native Authority System (NAS). However, according to Olasupo and Fayomi (2012) the NAS, which later became known as the Sole Native Authority System (SNA)) took no cognisance of QMs. The authors noted that:

The introduction of Sole Native Authority System hastened the marginalization of women traditional rulers in communities with gender balance in traditional ruler ship (Olasupo and Fayomi 2012:15).

Olasupo and Fayomi (2012:15; citing the work of Awe 1992:39)<sup>35</sup> reveal that Egba women articulated their repulsion about the SNA this way:

<sup>34</sup> Attoe, E.S.A (2002), „Problems Militating Against Women in Politics”. An online article: [www.onlinenigeria.com](http://www.onlinenigeria.com). (Accessed April, 2009 by Olatunde 2010)

<sup>35</sup> Awe, B.(1992) “Women and Politics in Historical Perspective” in Women and Politics in Nigeria, Ikeja: Malthouse Press Limited

The system of Sole Native Authority (SNA) had been a great source of oppression and suppression to the Egba people. Even most of the members of the council were not free to express their minds. The *Alake*<sup>36</sup> always passed as ‘Mr. Know all’. The Egba women would very much like the power of SNA removed because we are not happy under it. It is foreign to the custom of Egba.

The basic contention is that, the structures of inequality that has facilitated discrimination against women became entrenched in the colonial era because male dominated social systems were prominently promoted (The Guardian, 2009 cited in Olatunde 2010). Therefore, Olatunde (2010:21) notes that, ‘although structures of inequality existed in the pre-colonial times no doubt, however they were institutionalized as new legal structures under the colonial rule.’ For instance according to Agbalajobi (2010) the 1922 colonial constitution of Nigeria under Sir Hugh Clifford did not extend franchise to women.

Additionally, Olatunde (2010) also further explains that, not only the QMs but women in general were marginalized in a number of aspects- ‘economically, with the denial of access to loans, educationally by predetermining their school curricular and ensuring that girls enrol for things like domestic science as against other skill enhancing courses.’ To this effect Rojas (1994 cited in Olatunde 2010) argues that the colonial administration brought with it, the assumptions of ‘European patriarchy’ into Nigerian society (see also Agbalajobi 2010).

Therefore, as some scholars like Rattray (1923) has effectively argued for the case of QMs in the Gold Coast, the neglect of FTLs in Nigeria by the colonial administration was a broader reflection of the fact that the British refused to acknowledge women as a political force both in the family and the state. For instance Walter (2001; cited in Olatunde 2010) is of the view that, in Nigeria the colonial authority simply refused to recognise and cooperate with female office holders or women associations, hence, they faded into the background. These notwithstanding three FTLs at the time of independence in Nigeria were appointed into some of the Houses of Chiefs, namely; Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo Ransome kuti (appointed into the Western House of Chiefs); Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs) (Olatunde 20102, citing Attoe 2002; Rojas 1994).

### 3.7 Traditional authorities under CR in Ghana

Unlike the QMs who practically disappeared under the shadow of colonial rule, the chiefs found some place under the IRS, which was adopted by the British in Ghana and some other colonies in Africa.

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<sup>36</sup> The *Alake* of Egbaland or Abeokuta refers to the traditional ruler of these societies in Nigeria.

The IRS<sup>37</sup> was a system of governance, whereby the British governed the indigenous people through their native Chiefs; who acted as intermediaries between the British and their communes.

Among the dominant explanations offered by the colonialists for the adoption of the IRS<sup>38</sup> was that, they wanted to empower the native rulers and to establish a system of administration that was adaptable to the local institutions already in place (Toyin 2005, Broussalian 2011:1). According to Broussalian (2011:5) the British IRS was famous for two main characteristics: ‘the expectations and encouragement of the colonies to maintain self-sufficient governance, and the emphasis on creating local policy and institutions in accordance with local customs and laws.’

During the colonial era, the Gold Coast (now Ghana) was divided into three territories: the Colony-representing the coastal areas, the Asante Colony and the Northern territories. To facilitate the participation of the Chiefs in the administration of these colonies, the British promulgated the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance (NJO) in 1878. The law went through series of amendments in 1883, 1910 and also in 1924, and remained the foundation of all local administration until 1927.<sup>39</sup>

### **3.8 The status/role of the TAs under the IRS**

The chiefs occupied a recognised place and perform certain roles under the IRS system. The NJO and later the NAO all recognised the Paramount and Divisional Chiefs as important figures at the local government level and gave them some powers. Together with their councils of elders, they constituted the Native Administration or Authority headed by the Paramount Chief. In 1894, following the establishment of the Town Councils, the Native Authorities were allowed to nominate two Chiefs from each Town Council area to represent them in the Council. As active partners in the IRS, the Chiefs performed the following functions:

#### ***3.8.1 Maintenance of law and order***

First, the traditional authorities were responsible for the general maintenance of law and order within their Native Authority areas. The Paramount Chiefs were permitted to handle minor civil (including land tenure and native custom)

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<sup>37</sup> For information on the Indirect Rule System (IRS) as well as the position and role played by the Chiefs in the IRS in the Gold Coast(Ghana) the author relied heavily on: [http://ghanadistricts.com/home/?\\_s=49&s=4768&ss=780](http://ghanadistricts.com/home/?_s=49&s=4768&ss=780) (Accessed: July 30, 2012)

<sup>38</sup> James Coleman has defined indirect rule as a system of administration where the ‘essential features were the preservation of traditional political institutions and their adaptation, under the tutelage and direction of the British administration to the requirements of modern unit of local government’<sup>38</sup> Emezi (1983; quoted in Olasupo and Fayomi 2012:14)<sup>38</sup> also defines it as a system of indigenous rule whereby ‘traditional institutions of chiefs and other traditional rulers administer the natives under the supervision of British Administrative Officers.’

<sup>39</sup> In 1927, the passage of Native Administrative Ordinance (NAO) superseded the earlier NJO. The 1927 NAO recognised State Councils as the ultimate authority within each traditional state with powers over selection and destoolment of Chiefs and the wrongful detention of stool property. But its decisions were subject to appeal to the Provincial Councils.

and criminal cases, such as violations of the state's by-laws. They were also given some reasonable powers to promulgate by-laws relating to issues such as public lands and forests and the upkeep of roads. However, these powers were exercised within the framework of British law. Again, it was exercised concurrently with that of the British courts, and the Chiefs had no power to enforce their own decisions.

### ***3.8.2 Mobilisation of revenue***

Another role of the NAs was to collect taxes for the colonial government. Following the establishment of Native Treasuries in 1938, the Chiefs upon the advice of the colonial government, imposed and collected taxes from the local people. They also took fees and fines from the traditional courts. Sources indicate that, a significant part of these revenues was normally channelled to the central government and some amount withheld by the chiefs for community developments projects such as improving sanitation, building of schools and roads among others and also to assist the chiefs to meet their administrative expenses.

### ***3.8.3 Supervision of projects***

Traditional rulers did supervise projects in areas under their control and saw to the provision of new roads, markets etc. and maintained existing ones. A few Chiefs also sat in the Legislative Council to enact laws at the national level. At the local level, they could make bye-laws subject to the approval of the Governor.

### ***3.8.4 Liaisons with the colonial government***

As in today's Ghana, the Chiefs also acted as conduits between the colonial government and the local people. They were the agents through whom the colonial administration conveyed their policies to the people. On the flipside, any grievance and resentment that the people harboured was also channelled through the Chiefs to the colonial government. In this regard, the Chiefs were given representation in the Town and Provincial Councils.

### ***3.8.5 Mobilising the people for communal work***

Since the Chiefs had the trust and support of their subjects, they were often relied upon by the colonial administration to help in the mobilization of the people for communal work. The sources suggest that the chiefs usually achieved remarkable successes as the people always responded positively to their call.<sup>40</sup>

In effect, the IRS virtually made the TAs appendages of the British colonial administration (Awuah-Nyamekye 2009) and from the foregoing it succeeded in fostering a closer working relationship with the Chiefs. Nonetheless there was some resentment about the system.

## **3.9 Resentment about the IRS in Ghana**

In fact, some might argue that the British did well by recognising the traditional institutions and therefore did not necessarily undermine or

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<sup>40</sup> [http://ghanadistricts.com/home/?\\_=49&sa=4768&ssa=780](http://ghanadistricts.com/home/?_=49&sa=4768&ssa=780) (Accessed: July 30, 2012)

obliterate them, as it happened in the French colonies (Broussalian 2011). But the evidence suggests that the British failed to acknowledge the dual-sex political character of the Ghanaian/African political system (see Agorsah 1990, Stoeltje 1997) or could it that the male chiefs in Ghana deliberately dominated the QMs as Olasupo and Fayomi (2012) has observed in the case of the Egba state in Nigeria?

But it could be inferred from the above that, no where were the QMs mentioned, let alone recognised by the colonial government, especially under its IRS in the Gold Coast. And this goes to buttress the earlier assertion by Rattray (1923) that the British simply failed to acknowledge the QMs as a political force either in the family or the state. It also comes back to the strong claim by Steegstra (2007) that:

.....in Ghana, then Gold Coast, female rulers were conspicuously absent from local administration under the various colonial ordinances setting up native courts and tribunals. While indigenous tribunals of male chiefs and elders were recognised and their powers and jurisdiction delineated, nowhere were women accorded any recognition.

The question is then as to why did the British simply fail to recognise these powerful FTIs of Ghana, despite the fact that they were omnipresent in the traditional governance system, which they (the British) claimed they wanted to enhance under their policy of IRS? The most likely explanation seems to be-as held by most scholars of African political history is that, this “deliberate” colonial neglect of QMs was a ripple over effect of the Eurocentric notions and assumptions of GR which pertained before/during the 19<sup>th</sup> century England. These GR was tainted with the so called ‘Victorian doctrine’ that “a woman’s place is the Kitchen” (see for example Staudt 1984; Agbalajobi 2010; Olatunde 2010; Olasupo and Fayomi 2012 etc.).

### **3.10 The status of chieftaincy in post-colonial Ghana**

In order to appreciate the decline of queenship in Ghana (Von Struensee 2004, Steegstra 2009), it is instructive to first understand the status of chieftaincy in general in Ghana since independence in 1957.

According to Aryee (2007) all the constitutions that Ghana have adopted since independence, namely; the 1957, 1960, 1969, 1979 and the 1992 constitutions, duly recognised and guaranteed the position of traditional authorities. The current 1992 constitution upholds the Chieftaincy Act 1971(Act 370) which establishes chieftaincy and the various houses of chiefs and TCs in Ghana. The chieftaincy institution is autonomous and unlike the colonial era, the government have no right to *unnecessarily* interfere in the affairs of chieftaincy. Currently the institution has a three tier hierarchical governance structure, namely; the National House of Chiefs (NHC), the Regional Houses of Chiefs (RHC) and the Traditional Councils (TCs).

The NHC is the highest decision making body on chieftaincy and customary law in Ghana and handles all issues relating to chieftaincy. The house is composed of only fifty (50) paramount Chiefs from across the ten regions of Ghana, with five (5) chiefs elected from each region(*see table 2 in Appendix 2*). All the administrative expenses incurred by the NHC including

the monthly allowances paid to the members are charged on the Ghana government consolidated fund.<sup>41</sup>

It is again significant to note that, even though the 1992 constitution debars chiefs (including QMs) from taking part in 'active' party politics,<sup>42</sup> it nonetheless allows them to be appointed in to public offices for which they are otherwise qualified (Aryee 2007). For instance, the 1957, 1969 and the 1979 Constitutions all reserved one-third of the membership of District Councils for Chiefs.<sup>43</sup> However, under the Local Government Law of 1988 (PNDC Law 207), and also in the current 1992 Constitution, the Chiefs lost the explicit one-third quota reserved them within the structures of local government by the previous 1957, 1969 and the 1979 constitutions. But, the Chiefs still formed part of the category of people covered under Article 242(d) of the 1992 Constitution, which states that membership of the assemblies shall include:

.....other members not being more than thirty percent of all the members of the District Assembly, appointed by the President in consultation with the traditional authorities and other interest groups in the district.

Therefore, in practice the Article 242 (d) guarantees the automatic membership of Chiefs in the assemblies subject to the appointment by the central government (CG), even though a specific quota has not been reserved for them.

Therefore, from the above, it goes without saying that, traditional authorities still have some recognised position within the post-colonial state of Ghana;<sup>44</sup> and one might expect that the QMs who had been long ignored by the British within the colonial Native Authority System would have been brought on board.

### **3.11 The status/role of QMs/QMAs in Ghana today**

This section undertakes a general overview of QMs' contemporary role in Ghana by first highlighting some of their historical functions that have survived up till today; and secondly draws instances of their recent activities in a number of areas in Southern Ghana.

Different authors have alluded to the fact that the role of QMs has declined over the years in the Ghanaian society (e.g. Brydon 1996; Fayorsey and Amolo 2003 etc.) Brydon (1996:106) even contends that, '...to be a successful community leader and be able to promote women's projects, one does not have to hold a traditional office.' Meanwhile, she admits that in doing so, one might be constrained to work through the channels of office holding.

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<sup>41</sup> For more information on the NHCs see the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. The Consolidated Fund is the pool of all yearly revenues earned by the Government of Ghana.

<sup>42</sup> See Article 276 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana

<sup>43</sup> The 1969 Constitution even provided that not more than two chiefs from the Regional House of Chiefs should be selected in to the Regional Councils

<sup>44</sup> Though it must be admitted that there might be some decline over time, especially compared to the pre-colonial and the colonial era under the indirect rule system (see Ray 2003, Knierzinger 2011)

Stoeltje (2003) has also argued that even though the position of QMs has been affected by colonialism and modernisation, they are still vibrant and adapting to modern trends. In this paper, the contemporary role of QMs in Ghana will be examined from two angles. On the one hand, the QMs continue to play some of what could be described as their 'traditional roles' within the African political system (see Boaten 1992).<sup>45</sup> And on the other hand, they are re-emerging as development partners in the public arena.

First, in relation to the former, QMs still play the role of settling disputes, selecting and advising the chiefs and also, acting as caretaker chiefs upon the death of the male chief as well as the ritual role of attending funerals. For instance, commenting the advisory role of QMs, among the Akans, Boaten (1992:90) contends that, the concept of: '*Yenkobisa Abrewa*' that is, '*let us seek counselling from the old lady*' evolved and still persists up to today.'

Similarly, citing some of her prominent achievements in office as the current paramount QM of the Central Region of Ghana, Nana Ama Amissah (III) recounted her four major successes as follows: '(1) arbitration and settling of family disputes (2) free marital and pre-marital counselling (3) free health education to women, children and the religious bodies of the community and (4) the formation of the central region Queens association' (internet source).<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the crucial role of the QMs in the selection of chiefs was again re-echoed in a recent speech delivered by the Ghana Minister for Chieftaincy and Culture in November 2010, on the theme '*The role of queen mothers in promoting traditional values through advocacy for national development.*'<sup>47</sup> The minister exhorted the QMs '*to be honest and fair in the choice of candidates they want to be chiefs*' (Ghana web News Archive).<sup>48</sup> Perhaps, this is an indication of the role of QMs in this regard even today. Aside these, the QMs in Ghana still perform a number of functions:

### **3.11.1 Peace Advocacy**

First, some QMs have become advocates of peace especially during critical national events like elections. For instance, in June 2012, several QMs in the Amansie Traditional Area of the Ashanti Region undertook "a peace walk" 'to highlight the need for more political accommodation and tolerance in this year's [2012(mine)] elections'. The sources suggest that the event brought together a cross section of people in the area including; students and supporters of the various political parties. At the event, Nana Adwoa Pinamang III, QM of Asante-Bekwai and Chairperson of the Amansie QMA,

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<sup>45</sup> This role depends on the societal context since QMs have different powers and authority

<sup>46</sup> See <http://morehouse.edu/events/2012/queen/who-we-are.html> (Accessed 05-08-2012)

<sup>47</sup> It was at the inauguration of the Afigya-Kwabre Queen Mothers' Association at Kodie in the Ashanti region of Ghana.

<sup>48</sup> See

<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=196993> (Accessed August 5, 2012)

‘appealed to political leaders and their supporters to climb down from what she said was their overly aggressive and antagonistic postures’.<sup>49</sup>

### ***3.11.2 Collaborating with NGOs in public education***

Similarly, media sources also show that with support and active collaboration with some NGOs and other donor agencies, a number of QMAs are now agents of public education on pertinent social issues like girl-child education, teenage pregnancy and safe abortion as well as violence against girls and women not only in Ghana, but in the rest of the West African sub region. For example, in July 16, 2012, the Asogli QMA in the Volta Region, with the support of the Commonwealth Foundation organised a workshop on the theme: *“Building Bridges to end Economic Abuse and Violence against Girls and Women Employed in the Informal Sector in Ghana.”* The workshop brought together about 60 participants across Ghana and Nigeria. According to the Chronicle Newspaper report, the workshop examined key issues including:

...identifying and developing strategies towards addressing cases of violence and economic abuse of girls and women employed in the informal sector in Ghana, promoting the education and employment of the girl child as a strategy towards ending violence against women in West Africa...<sup>50</sup>

It also touched on the role of civil society, traditional rulers and faith leaders as well as governments in putting a stop to economic abuse and violence against women engaged in the informal sector in Ghana.

### ***3.11.3 Help in the provision of social infrastructure***

In addition, there are few instances where some QMs have helped in the provision of educational infrastructure in their communities. In February 2009 the Paramount QM of SASADU Traditional Areas in the Volta Region of Ghana donated books on the history of the Ewe people to the traditional area. According to the QM, Mamaga Akosua, the books which contains the historical roots of the people in the region, would help foster unity and peaceful co-existence among the diverse Ewe ethnic groups in the region.<sup>51</sup>

### ***3.11.4 Provision of traditional social safety net***

Another significant area QMs contemporary role in the Ghanaian society is the provision of social support for needy children and children orphaned by HIV/AIDS (see Agyei-Mensah 2008).<sup>52</sup> Particularly noted for this is the Manya Krobo Queen Mothers Association (MKQMA). The UU-UNO under the *Every Child is our Child Project* collaborates with the MKQMA to provide

<sup>49</sup> See <http://news.peacefmonline.com/social/201206/120374.php> (Accessed August 5, 2012)

<sup>50</sup> See <http://allafrica.com/stories/201207170620.html> (31-07-2012)

<sup>51</sup> See [http://paramountqueen.com/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12:140209-queen-mother-donates-publication-on-ewe-sojourn-the-ghanaiantimes&catid=6:ghanaians-press-articles&Itemid=10](http://paramountqueen.com/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12:140209-queen-mother-donates-publication-on-ewe-sojourn-the-ghanaiantimes&catid=6:ghanaians-press-articles&Itemid=10) (Accessed: August 5, 2012)

<sup>52</sup> See also <http://www.uu-uno.org/what-we-do/ecoc/queenmothers/> (Accessed: August 2,2012)

traditional social safety net for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The UNDP reports that, the 370 members of the MKQMA have been responsible for the care and education of four hundred and sixty-six (466) children; while civic groups, with support from the Ghana AIDS Commission, are caring for one hundred and twenty (120) more children (internet source).<sup>53</sup>

### **3.11.5 Other Activities**

The QMs in Ghana also undertake other ancillary activities on a day to day basis. On August 29, 2011, the *Public Agenda*<sup>54</sup> Newspaper in Ghana had an interview with the QM of Akropong Akuapem Traditional Area in the Eastern Region. In the interview, the QM, Nana Akua Gyasiwaa (I) outlined the contemporary role of QMs in Ghana as follows:

....source for funds for community development, ensure discipline and obedience from their subjects....encourage our subjects to go to school, sometimes we adopt children. For example, I have 15 children that am taking care of. Also sometimes bear the hospital bills, cost of funeral organization and outdooring. We also help school drop-outs to learn a trade, educate young girls to avoid teenage pregnancy. Again, we help our male counterparts to take vital decisions affecting our communities. We also lobby government for budgetary support; and we nominate successors to the throne when the incumbent “leaves for the village.”<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, some of the assertions of Nana Akua Gyasiwaa (I) are not inconsistent with what was summarised as the contemporary role of the QM at a recent International Conference on Chieftaincy in Accra on January 2003.<sup>56</sup> Fayorsey (2003:6; quoted in Kreitzer 2005:4)<sup>57</sup> also notes that as members of the QMAs,

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<sup>53</sup> Refer to 52 above (Accessed July 25, 2012)

<sup>54</sup> <http://allafrica.com/stories/201108310887.html> (QM takes care of children, August 2, 2012)

<sup>55</sup> In the Akan culture, to “leave for the village” is a polite way of pronouncing the death of a traditional ruler.

<sup>56</sup> At the conference, Boateng (2003; quoted in Kreitzer 2005:4) gave her understanding of the contemporary role of the QM in Ghana as follows:

‘She is the number one royal in her lineage....She is a community social welfare officer. She makes sure everyone gets their resources fairly. She is a liaison officer between people and services. She is a role model for women and children and explains policies to them concerning their lives. She is involved in health education and keeps up with her own education in order to serve others. She encourages and helps women to be economically strong and gives advice as to how to raise children. She is a guidance counsellor to chiefs, parents and children. She supervises puberty rites or picks someone to supervise these rights.’

<sup>57</sup> Fayorsey, C. (2003). *Gender, culture and governance: Ghanaian Queen Mothers as leaders in development*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Chieftaincy in Africa: Culture, Governance and Development, Accra, Ghana.

the QMs also lobby ‘traditional and political leaders in order to influence traditional and public policy in favour of women.’

### 3.12 Transformations in queenship in Ghana

According to Ray (2003) even though the institution of queenship had long been part of the southern ethnic groups of Ghana (even before and during the colonial era) there were heated debates sometime after independence in Ghana, as to whether women, including the QMs could be ‘chiefs’ in Ghana; and if so, what kind of chief. But, this was finally resolved in 1979 following the recognition of the QMs as ‘chiefs’ under the 1979 constitution. This is similarly reflected in the current 1992 constitution of Ghana. What this legal turn in 1979 implied was that, gender from then become an essential element in the structure and organisation of the chieftaincy institution in post-colonial Ghana (Ray 2003).

In more recent times, there is an interesting trend in Northern Ghana with the decision by some traditional areas to start installing QMs.<sup>58</sup> However, it is important to note that, even though many societies in the north did not have QMs in the exact sense of the concept as it pertains in southern Ghana, particularly among the Akans, there were/are women who have in the past, and even now act in these capacities; and are commonly referred to as *Magajias* (cf. Fayorsey and Amolo 2003).<sup>59</sup>

Another significant development that has been observed in the 1990s by scholars like Boaten (1992) and later Akyea (1998) is the gradual infiltration of western formal education in to the qualifications for Queenship in many Ghanaian societies. In his study of the Ewe people in the Volta Region of Ghana, Akyea (1998: 29) noted that, among the Ewe, though the QM is normally the ‘most senior woman of the clan from which the next chief would be selected after the death of the current ruler. Today, factors such as education and national influence may override the seniority requirement.’ Boaten (1992:94) also observed in the Akan areas that, ‘it appears quite remote to enstool an illiterate’ as a QM and that they are required unlike previously, to possess either a Middle School Leaving Certificate, a Certificate in General Education or a University Degree and above. The educated QMs, as Boaten notes ‘have been bringing new dimensions in to the role of the *Ahenmaa* [QMs (mine)].’

Again, there is also the emergence of numerous QMAs across the length and breadth of the country. Boaten (1992) reveals that the first recognised QMA in Ghana could be traced back to 1983 at Cape Coast. According to him it was initiated by the Rawlings’s government and their meetings were occasionally supervised by either representatives of the government or the 31<sup>st</sup> December Women’s Movement.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.ghananewsagency.org/details/Features/Northern-Traditional-Councils-Role-of-Queen-Mothers/?ci=10&ai=31994> (Accessed May 25, 2012)

<sup>59</sup> See [http://norsaac.org/current\\_projects/magazia/](http://norsaac.org/current_projects/magazia/)

<sup>60</sup> A women’s organisation formed the wife of the former president Rawlings aimed at empowering women including QMs in Ghana.

### 3.12.1 Efforts at empowering QMs in Ghana

Perhaps, the earliest efforts to enhance the role of QMs in post-independent Ghana could be traced to 1979 when the post-colonial government for the first time after the formal demise of British rule, broke the cord of the colonial neglect of QMs in the formal governance system in the country. The 1979 constitution which gave vibrancy to the chieftaincy institution in general, equally exhumed QMs in Ghana from their colonial coffin. The fact that the constitution legally acknowledged that QMs were chiefs in Ghana provided a solid legal foundation for them to reassert their position in the post-colonial state of Ghana.

Following from the above, the 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement (31<sup>st</sup> DWM) in Ghana, which was formed by the former First Lady Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings also aided in bringing QMs to the limelight of modern governance. As Boaten (1992) has pointed, during the time the first recognised QMA was formed somewhere around 1983 in the Eastern Region of Ghana, the 31<sup>st</sup> DWM used to engage these QMs in occasional meetings and workshops to train them to educate their communities on health and reproductive issues.<sup>61</sup>

However, of late a number of non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, donor agencies as well as the international community at large, have been paying serious attention to the role of QMs in Ghana. Notable among them are the Commonwealth secretariat, the UU-UNO, the Morehouse College in the US among others. They organise conferences and workshops to equip the QMs with knowledge and skills needed to promote development in their communities and also to help enhance the good governance agenda.<sup>62</sup> In May 2011, about fifty (50) QMs participated in a five day workshop under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretariat in conjunction with the Ghana Institute for Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). This was intended 'to support and to strengthen the capacity of Queen Mothers in the promotion of good governance in Ghana to improve the lives of ordinary people.'<sup>63</sup>

Fayorsey and Amolo (2003) have also shown that in July 2000, CEDPA/Ghana<sup>64</sup>, in collaboration with the YWCA<sup>65</sup>, embarked on a program with Queen Mothers and Magajias in six (6) regions in Ghana to address the impact of HIV/AIDS in their communities. This initiative funded by USAID, was aimed at sensitizing QMs and *Magajias* 'on the issue of HIV/AIDS, empower them to work with their communities to reduce stigmas surrounding PLWHA, and provide HIV/AIDS prevention messages'(Fayorsey and Amolo 2003: 2).

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<sup>61</sup> Perhaps, it was the interest that the 31<sup>st</sup> DWM had in the QMs that later inspired the Ex-President Rawlings and some of his top officials to push for the inclusion of the QMs in the NHC; though that never succeeded till he left power in 2001(Boaten 1992).

<sup>62</sup> See <http://www.modernghana.com/news/381779//african-royalty-to-visit-atlanta.html> (Accessed August 10, 2012)

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/236569/130511queenmother.htm> (Accessed: July 25, 2012)

<sup>64</sup> Centre for Development and Population Activities(CEDPA)

<sup>65</sup> Young Women's Christian Association(YWCA)

It is also important to acknowledge the recent decision by the government of Ghana to institute allowances for paramount QMs across the country. The Ghana Minister for Chieftaincy and Culture, Alexander Asum-Ahensah in a recent address to parliament revealed that two-hundred and one (201) paramount Chiefs and QMs across the country have been included on the government's payroll, with effect from January 1, 2011 for an allowance of eighty (80) cedi<sup>66</sup> a month as of that date.<sup>67</sup> It is the view of the government that, these allowances would help facilitate the work of the QMs in their various communities (*Online Chronicle News*, July 25, 2012).<sup>68</sup>

The formation of various QMAs across the country can also be seen as a self empowering strategy on the part of the QMs. These bodies have presented the QMs as a critical mass, fortified to galvanise and draw public attention to their role in society. It reaffirms the assertion of Steegstra (2009:106) that:

....holding a queen mother's title does have a surplus value; but to be influential, women have to organize themselves in wider regional and national networks.

It is therefore not surprising that the rise of QMAs in Ghana has seen increased government efforts to recognise them as a force in the governance process in Ghana. Ghana News sources indicate that the recent decision by government to include the QMs in the NHC came on the heels of persistent requests and petitions to the NHC and the parliament of Ghana by the Ghana QMAs (*Internet source*, July 30, 2012).<sup>69</sup> Moreover, according to media report, even the latest addition of the paramount QMs to the government payroll to take monthly allowances like the male Chiefs, was the result of several agitations and pleas to successive governments by the QMs (*Modern Ghana News*, August 10, 2012).<sup>70</sup>

Currently, the media and the civil society in general in Ghana have given a moral boost to the struggles of the QMs. For instance, in November 2011, participants at a regional forum organised by the MOWAC and IDEA<sup>71</sup> on the theme: *Women's Participation in Leadership and Decision Making, the key to National development*<sup>72</sup> condemned and described as unfair and discriminatory the continuous exclusion of QMs in the NHC (*Online News Source*, August 20, 012).<sup>73</sup> Again on August 17, 2012, the *Daily Graphic* which is the *National*

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<sup>66</sup> That is approximately 35 euro/month as of today

<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, the minister reported an upward adjustment to this in his recent address to parliament: 'Madam Speaker, it may interest you and the House to know that the allowances to the chiefs and queen mothers have, with effect from January this year, been increased from GH¢100 and GH¢80 to GH¢150 and GH¢100 respectively

<sup>68</sup> See news link: <http://ghanaian-chronicle.com/queenmothers-now-on-gov%20%99t-payroll/> (Accessed July 25, 2012).

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.eldis.org/assets/Docs/18403.html> (Accessed: July 30, 2012)

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.modernghana.com/news/319824/1/queenmothers-now-on-govt-payroll.html> (Accessed: August 10, 2010)

<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) and Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in Ghana.

<sup>72</sup> See <http://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/exclusion-of-queens-from-national-house-of-chiefs-must-end-forum/> (accessed: August 20, 2012)

*Newspaper* in Ghana dedicated its *Editorial* titled: 'Our Queens Deserve Better' to the course of the QMs by calling on the NHC to push embrace the legal reforms that would guarantee the QMs a fair representation in the various houses of chiefs(*Online News Source*, August 20, 2012).<sup>73</sup>

All these efforts have been instrumental in redefining the place of QMs in Ghana today.

### **3.12.2 The dilemma/constraints of QMs in Ghana today**

It is important to note that even with the explicit legal recognition of QMs within the chieftaincy institution by both the 1979 and the 1992 Constitutions, their representation in the various formal institutions of governance, including the NHC, the RHC and the TCs has for long been a "tug of war" in the country (Struensee 2004).<sup>74</sup> Boaten (1992) has noted that following strong calls for representation in the formal institutions of governance by the QMs, it was resolved under the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana that 'there was no need for special seats to be created for the Stool mothers *or QMs [mine]* in those Traditional Councils' (Constitutional Committee of Experts 1991; Consultative Assembly 1992; Constitution 1992, cited in Boaten 1992:95).

However, according to some recent media reports, the government announced the inclusion of about twenty (20) QMs in the NHC (*Internet source*, July 25, 2012).<sup>75</sup> But the President of the NHC recently in August 2012 clarified that the inclusion of the twenty (20) QMs is still a proposal before the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) which is yet to review the legislation that would allow for their inclusion (*Ghana News Source*, August 20, 2012).<sup>76</sup>

Again, as I indicated earlier, Article 242(d) of the 1992 Constitution allows the CG to appoint one-third of the membership of the Non Elected Councillors (NECs) of assemblies in consultation with the Chiefs. Usually this makes the paramount or divisional Chiefs of the various LG areas automatic members of these assemblies (Ayee 2007). But, at the same time, under the Affirmative Action Guidelines (AAG) of 1998, thirty-percent (30%) of that one-third CG quota has also been reserved for women (Gyimah 2008). Though this has helped to boost the representation of women in the assemblies over the years (Gyimah 2008) the evidence suggest that, the benefits of these AAG quota often eludes the QMs. According to Wuripe (2011) the appointment of the NEC is usually left by the CG to Executives of the ruling party at the LG level. Consequently, the women who are sympathisers of the

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<sup>73</sup> See <http://www.graphic.com.gh/dailygraphic/page.php?news=22965> (Accessed: August 20, 2012)

<sup>74</sup> In spite of the emphasis on gender equity and equality, especially under the banner of the good governance agenda, the male Chiefs have always represented the traditional authorities where there are provisions for them to be represented in the formal institutions of governance. For instance, it is normally the President of the NHC (who has always been a man) who represent the traditional leaders in institutions like the Council of State and also the Lands Commission at the national level; and at also at the LG level the paramount or divisional Chiefs are normally appointed to the assemblies.

<sup>75</sup> <http://morehouse.edu/events/2012/queen/who-we-are.html> (Accessed July 25, 2012)

<sup>76</sup> See <http://www.ghanagov.gh/index.php/news/features/15447-chiefs-want-queens-to-join-houses-of-chiefs> (Accessed: August 20, 2012)

ruling party are normally preferred to the QMs who normally do not take part in any active party politics. More to the point, the AAG have made no explicit reference to QMs among the women to be covered under this quota. It thus implies that, the CG is not obliged under these very guidelines to automatically appoint QMs to the assemblies.

Another constraint that has hampered the QMs' public role, particularly their representation in the various houses of chiefs emanates from the endogenous norms and values as well as the cultural beliefs of the Ghanaian society (Assimeng 1990; Boaten 1992; Fayorsey and Amolo 2003). According to Busia (1951, cited in Boaten 1992) the history of many Akan areas indicates that women were the early rulers, but their roles were hampered during periods of menstruation. Assimeng (1990; quoted in Boaten 1992:94) also reiterated a similar concern that:

...In Africa generally various myths; taboos, customs and traditions had historically assigned women to a ritually (and therefore socio-politically) inferior status. One principal cause of this discrimination has been menstruation, seen as both spirit- change and polluting at the same time.

In the Ghanaian as well as some other African societies, men including the male chiefs hold the belief that menstrual blood is impure and demonic and has the potential of destroying their charms. That was probably the reason why menstruating women could not even cook for and also not follow men to war in the olden days. Therefore Stoeltje (1997) have noted that most of the QMs who played an active role in the pre-colonial politics like *Akyawaa* and *Yaa Asantewaa* only did so after they had passed the menstrual age. Scholars observe that since its creation, the all-male NHC have similarly used these menstrual and other customary reasons to dismiss the QMs' requests to join the houses of chiefs and the traditional councils (TCs)

However, on August 15, 2012, the NHC came under immense pressure to accept the QMs in to their midst, as the NHC is offered the additional mandate to examine bills before they are passed in to laws. This also follows the NHC's demands from the current Constitutional Review Commission (CRC)<sup>77</sup>, to create a Second Chamber of Parliament for chiefs in Ghana. Meanwhile, a gender advocate Madam Angela Dwamena Aboagye has strongly argued that: 'the all male house of chiefs must first accept queen mothers into their fold' (*Ghana News source*, August 15, 2012)<sup>78</sup> Commenting on the issue on Ghana's Joy News (Oral Interview, August 15, 2012) A. S. Anamzoya<sup>79</sup> however contends that efforts to get the QMs into the NHC must start by reforming the rigid procedures of becoming a member of the TCs and the RHCs since members of the NHC are drawn from these lower houses. Meanwhile, in a lecture on August 17, 2012 on the theme: '*Chieftaincy Peace and*

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<sup>77</sup> The government set up the CRC since 2010 to review the current 1992 Constitution of Ghana

<sup>78</sup> <http://edition.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201208/92133.php> (Accessed: August 15, 2012)

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Alhassan Sulemana Anamzoya is a Lecturer at the Department of Sociology, University of Ghana.

*Unity – A National Challenge*' held in Accra, the president of the NHC finally cleared all the ambiguities regarding the inclusion of QMs in the various houses of chiefs when he was reported to have stated that:

The National house of Chiefs (NHC) is proposing constitutional amendments to allow queens to become members of the NHC and Regional Houses of Chiefs (RHC). The proposals are for five queens to serve as members of the Regional Houses of Chiefs (RHC), and two queens to be elected from each region to join their colleagues at the NHC (*Ghana News source*, August 20, 2012).<sup>80</sup>

These developments could be seen as a good starting point in addressing some of the dilemmas facing the QMs, in terms of their representation in the formal institutions of governance in Ghana today.

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<sup>80</sup> See <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/news/features/15447-chiefs-want-queens-to-join-houses-of-chiefs> (Accessed: August 20, 2012)

# Chapter 4

## Analysing the Decline and the Dynamics in the Status/Role of Queen Mothers in Ghana

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to address the questions raised in this study by employing the theories and concepts discussed previously in the second chapter. It further tries to analyse the recent dynamics where institution of queenship appears to be regaining vibrancy, especially in light of the emergence of many QMAs as well as the recent attempts to transfer the institution to the three northern regions of Ghana.

### 4.1 Colonial path-dependencies/historical institutionalism

This section looks at the decline in the institution of queenship in Ghana, partly as a product of the patriarchal nature of the initial design of the institutions of governance and its accompanying factors that sustained it overtime. I argue that the advent of colonialism, which came with the imposition of the Western institutions of state, represents a “crisis” in the political organisation of pre-colonial African societies. As Krasner (1984:234) has argued, ‘crisis situations tend to become the watersheds in a state's institutional development.’ The crisis of colonialism in Ghana was characterised by a significant rupture in the important position occupied by QMs in the country.

Despite the fact that the colonial regime claimed it wanted to promote a system of governance based on the traditional systems of the African people, it emerged clearly from the literature that their so called native authority system took no cognisance of the QMs. It is against this fact that some scholars (Staudt 1984; Agbalajobi 2010; Olatunde 2010s etc) contend that the patriarchal notions of GR that was prevailing in England during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier was simply transplanted in to the African society; which had dire consequences for the QMs.<sup>81</sup>

But, another dimension is that, the initial neglect of the QMs created grounds for their subsequent marginalisation in the sense that, the native authority system politically and economically empowered the chiefs as against the FTLs. For instance, the economic gains that the chiefs made through the

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<sup>81</sup> As Rattray (1923: 84-85, quoted in Stoeltje 2003) candidly observed in the first half of the 20th century:

...the Queen Mothers are unrecognized by us...In other words, the Ashanti have simply accepted the fact that our system seemed to take no official cognizance of women as a power in the family or in the state, and therefore did not question our methods. Now I feel certain we have here a tremendous potential power for good in these old mothers of Africa;...Surely if we, that is, the Government, do not in some small measure give the respect and honour that has been the Queen Mothers' right, and the Queen Mother is to an Ashanti the personification of motherhood, we cannot be surprised if her children follow our example.

collection of taxes and fines bolstered their economic standing and enabled them to perpetuate their dominance in the colonial society even after independence. In the particular case of the Gold Coast, Steegstra (2007) notes for instance that:

....female rulers were conspicuously absent from local administration under the various colonial ordinances setting up native courts and tribunals. While indigenous tribunals of male chiefs and elders were recognised and their powers and jurisdiction delineated, nowhere were women accorded any recognition.

Meanwhile, Olasupo and Fayomi (2012) have made us to understand that in the case of the Egba state in Nigeria, FTLs were somehow represented, though they had discontents about the power imbalances within the SNA. It is also important to state that even at the dawn of independence the post-colonial state of Nigeria was quick to recognise the position of FTLs by appointing *three* FTLs to the various houses of chiefs (Olatunde 2010). But, from the literature gathered so far, there is little evidence in Ghana to the effect that QMs during the colonial era either recognised their representation as a right or did they struggle to be represented in the colonial governance system. Therefore, the absence of any recognised force from either endogenous or exogenous sources for reforms to that patriarchal edifice, probably also accounted for why the system persisted for such a long time throughout the colonial era. And this seems to confirm the assumption of HI scholars like Krasner (1984) that sometimes an endogenous/exogenous force is necessary in order to break the chain of path-dependency and consequently effect a change to an initial policy or institutional design.

## 4.2 Dimensions of gender and power

### 4.2.1 *Sexual division of power*

As some scholars have noted, the basic unit in the political organisation of most African societies including Ghana is the family or clan, where in most cases, political authority resides in the man as the head of the household or clan. In Ghana majority of households are headed by males (70.5%) with only about 30% female headed households (GLSS<sup>82</sup> 5 2008). Therefore, QMs in Ghana, like other women in Africa find themselves within a societal context in which power from the start is unequally distributed within the household or clan. This situation is basically underpinned by *patriarchy* where the man, by virtue of the dictates of socially constructed norms, customs, notions and beliefs, is automatically considered the head of the household. In his position as the head, he therefore presides over the distribution of the household property including the land and other resources. Similarly, even under the post-colonial state of Ghana, the male chiefs and not QMs are constitutionally recognised as the custodians of the land. Hence, they receive rents and royalties in respect of these lands and that helps to bolster their position vis a vis the FTLs. Thus, even though they are both recognised constitutionally as Chiefs, QMs and the male chiefs assume their political roles already within a

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<sup>82</sup> Ghana Living Standard Survey GLSS 5 (2008)

context characterised by power asymmetry largely underpinned by patriarchy in the Ghanaian society.

#### **4.2.2 *Sexual division of labour***

The sexual division of labour (DL) in most African societies which is partly a legacy of colonialism also play some role in limiting the QMs' role in the public arena. (Staudt 1984) has argued that the colonial economy drew a sharp wedge between the private and public sphere confined women including QMs to domestic affairs. For instance, a critical examination of both the historic and contemporary role of QMs reveals a fundamental link between their community roles as leaders to the domestic role of motherhood. For instance, much of their community roles as the literature indicates have been centred around domestic issues ranging from resolving marital disputes or disputes between women and providing counselling on reproductive and health matters to women and young girls.

Again, the colonial sexual division of labour which de-emphasised female education or limited their education to some domestic sciences has also undermined the public role of QMs. The study established that the male traditional leaders in the Ghanaian societies compared to the QMs are highly educated and rich. Steegstra (2009:113) in her work on the Krobos lamented the fact that unlike the male chiefs who are mostly highly educated and have held very powerful positions in society before, the QMs either educated or not and 'irrespective of their rank, are traders or sellers by profession.' This seems to reflect the colonial educational pattern in Africa which emphasised more of male than female education (Olatunde 2010)

#### **4.2.3 *The structure of cathexis***

One of the most fundamental obstacles from the literature, which constrained the public role of QMs in Ghana both in the past and today, is the dogmatic and strongly held cultural beliefs, norms and values regarding the female body and its associated taboos. It is believed among men in many societies in Africa including Ghana that the woman in a state of menstruation is both demonic and spiritually polluting (cf. Boateng 1992). Sources suggest that in Ghana, the all-male membership of the NHC, which is established by statute, had implicitly used these superstitious and other cultural beliefs to dismiss several requests to include QMs in the house. It has been the belief of the male chiefs and men in general that contact with a menstruating woman has the potential to reduce the potency or efficacy of their charms or even destroy it (Boateng 1992). However, this excuse seems to represent an interesting paradox in the sense that the chiefs had historically lived and worked with the same QMs in their traditional areas. And even among the Akans with the QM been the one who selects and acts as the principal counsellor of the chief. Besides, according to Boateng (1992) menstruating women were only debarred from following the men to war; and this is an activity the male chiefs rarely embarked upon these days.

### **4.3 Gender and gender relations**

While the literature reveals some isolated cases of some few QMs playing an influential role in the pre-colonial era in Ghana and Nigeria, a careful look at the historic and some of the contemporary roles of the QMs in Ghana, seem

to celebrate the gender differentiation in the roles between men and women in the Ghanaian society. It appears that the QMs' roles were/are still to a large extent focused on issues relating to women and also to more reproductive and domestic issues-motherhood; which are customarily constructed/stereotyped as within women's domain. This therefore tends to normalise and reinforce the QMs' exclusion from the more public formal institutions of governance in which the male chiefs have often been the focus, in situations where political representation by traditional authorities is required within such institutions.

#### **4.4 Patriarchy**

As discussed earlier in the section on the sexual division of power; quite central but implicit in the political organisation of the Ghanaian society is the notion that the male chiefs as against the QMs are the "natural" rulers. The society puts communal land and other resources under their custody. It has also been discerned from the findings that the male chiefs have used their strong position in the FG institutions to erect barriers against the QMs entry in to the sphere. For instance, there is no obvious external force that could be preventing the QMs from joining the various houses of chiefs and TCs in Ghana except the male chiefs in these houses. This is because, those institutions are assumed to be apolitical and autonomous-free from governmental control, under the constitution of Ghana.

#### **4.4 Empowerment-resources, agency and achievements**

While the colonial era could be described as a moment of significant rapture in the role of QMs in Ghana, recent trends in the country has seen rejuvenation in the institution of queenship, with the emergence of several QMAs across the country; their announced inclusion for the first time in the NHC, including the emergence of the institution of queenship also in the three northern regions of Ghana. This section delves in to this phenomenon by drawing on Kabeer's (1993) notions of resources and agency in women's empowerment. It examines the influence of both the internal and external agents that contributed to both empowering the QMs and also drawing the attention of policy makers to their contemporary role in Ghana.

##### **4.4.1 Resources and agency-exogenous forces**

Generally, the global advocacy for women's political representation under the banner of good governance as well as the activities of several NGOs and donor agencies have contributed to the recent rejuvenation of queenship in Ghana. This global policy agenda on good governance provides not only a legitimate ground for the QMs to demand a fair representation in national governance but also, it projects their demand as a moral and democratic imperative.

The activities of other external agencies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat (CS) UU-UNO, USAID, the Morehouse College Pan-African Global Experience (MPAGE) and its allied institutes in the US among others, cannot be isolated from the increasing vibrancy in queenship in Ghana. These agencies have of late been working with a number of QMAs in Ghana on a number of issues relating HIV/AIDS prevention and also providing social safety for children orphaned by the disease. Their engagement with the QMs has thus, contributed to highlighting their constraints and also imbuing in them

the group consciousness and the '*power within*' (Kabeer 1994, cited in Bratton and Ray 2002, cf. Oxaal and Baden 1997) to stand up for their rights and privileges.

Again, it is the view of the CS that the QMs' participation in the local and national institutions of governance will 'promote good governance, as well as women's rights and their access to health and education' (*Commonwealth Secretariat*, August 20, 2012).<sup>83</sup> The CS also notes that, it will enable the QMs to provide valuable inputs on customary law and practices as well as civil law.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to legitimising the QMs quest for representation, the external organisations with their partners in Ghana also facilitate the *agency* of the QMs by helping sometimes with the financial and material resources needed to organise conferences and workshops and also to have regular meetings. This is what Kabeer (1994) like Oxaal and Baden (1997) also refer to as the '*power with*.' For instance, the Morehouse College recently sponsored a trip of some twenty (20) QMs to the US, to undertake workshops that would equip them to enhance good governance and development in their communities. Similarly, the Commonwealth Foundation also recently sponsored the conference of the Asogli QMA in the Volta Region of Ghana which brought together QMs from neighbouring countries like Nigeria.

#### **4.4.2 Resources and agency-endogenous stakeholders**

The efforts of some personalities and gender activists, organisations, the media and civil society in general has been very instrumental in bringing QMs to the limelight today. First, several women NGOs such as the 31<sup>st</sup> DWM, WiLDAF Ghana, and CEDPA/Ghana just to mention but a few, have been working with the QMs in various capacities namely; education on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy among others. These developmental activities draw public attention to the role of QMs in various parts of the country.

In addition, the contribution of the educated QMs cannot also be underestimated in the latest developments in queenship in Ghana. The trend that has seen the preference to install educated women as QMs in several communities in Ghana implies that, the leadership of the QMs are more enlightened than before, and are also in a better position to understand issues properly. Also, having adequate information about the various legal instruments at their disposal, the educated QMs have been equipped with the '*power to*' challenge the existing patriarchal structures, as it has been seen in their current demands for representation at various levels of institutional governance.

Moreover, over the last few years, the media in Ghana has also given much exposure to the positive contribution of QMs to national development

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<http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/190896/163081/236569/130511queenmother.htm> (Accessed: August 30, 2012)

<sup>84</sup> Dr. Roger Koranteng –Director of Governance at the Commonwealth Secretariat, UK also emphasized this point at the recent workshop in Ghana to school QMs to enable them contribute to good governance and development in their communities (see <http://www.modernghana.com/news/330274/1/women-issues-form-crucial-part-of-good-governance-.html> (Accessed: August 31, 2012)

and thus, in the process highlighting their problems and constraints. For instance, the issue of the QMs' exclusion in the various houses of chiefs as well as the assemblies across the country has occupied centre stage in the media reportage on women's empowerment in Ghana especially following the recent several conferences and workshops to school QMs on good governance in Ghana.

Finally, the recent steps taken by the government of Ghana to institute allowances for the paramount QMs just like the male chiefs in Ghana, could be argued as one of the immediate forces that is driving the emergence of QMs in the three northern regions of Ghana and the rejuvenation of queenship in general. According to the *Ghanaian Times Newspaper* (July 25, 2010)<sup>85</sup> the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture in Ghana directed the NHC to collate data on QMs or their equivalent office holders-the *Magajias* in the three northern regions, for them to be paid allowances to enable them enhance upon their work. This development created the latest impetus and motivation to install QMs in the north of Ghana. Interestingly, even though the concept of queenship is quite new in the north, the current president of the Ghana Paramount Queen Mothers Association, *Pognaba Namalteng Danig Sugri (I)*, as some media sources indicate, hail from the northern part of the country(*Ghana News source* August 20, 2012).<sup>86</sup>

#### **4.4.3 Achievements**

The idea of empowerment within the context of the QMs' representation in the formal governance systems in Ghana, involves not just securing places in these institutions but also been able to achieve substantive representation within them. It also goes beyond mere mobilisation for collection action-*power within*; as in the case of the emergence of QMAs to attaining the *power over*. This in effect, entails the reversal of the male structures of domination both in the domestic and the public arena. The evidence therefore suggests that while the recent dynamics in queenship portray a positive trend towards the final goal of empowerment, it has not achieved the ultimate aim breaking male chiefs' monopoly in the houses of chiefs and traditional councils as well as the other formal institutions where TAs have representation.

### **4.5 Formal and informal institutions of governance**

The literature indicates that modern governance in Ghana today represents a complex overlapping pattern of formal and informal institutions. The latter has since the colonial era been co-opted in to the former as a way of building formal institutions of governance that draws from and reflects the indigenous customs, values, norms and the aspirations of Ghanaians. However, the study has shown that the "marriage" of these institutions over the years has been characterised by "selective co-optation" of the male chiefs to the neglect of the QMs in to the formal institutions of governance in Ghana. This has partly

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<sup>85</sup> <http://newtimes.com.gh/story/national-house-of-chiefs-to-provide-info-on-nr-queenmothers-for-allowances> (Accessed: August 28, 2012)

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<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=245981> (Accessed: August 30, 2012)

contributed to the general decline in the positions and role of the QMs over the years.

#### **4.6 Political Representation**

The literature reviewed so far indicates that QMs in Ghana, since the colonial era have never been represented in the formal governance systems in Ghana. But, in the Egba state in Nigeria, the evidence shows that the QMs were somehow represented in the colonial era and also at the dawn of political independence in Nigeria. However, the literature also reveals that their representation was more “descriptive” than “substantive” because as Olasupo and Fayomi (2012) suggested, the *Alake* (male chiefs) in the Sole Native Authority (SNA) system simply dominated/suppressed the voices of the FTIs. This implies that merely having the QMs represented in Ghana, might not automatically lead to women’s ‘substantive’ representation.

Moreover, even though the data reveals a number of activities undertaken by the QMs/QMAs in several areas in Southern Ghana such as engaging in peace advocacy and charity works, fighting violence against women and girls among others, there was little evidence regarding their interaction with the ordinary women of their communities. Hence, while these activities point to the resilience of queenship as an institution; overall, in terms of representation, it constituted a relatively weak evidence to support the study’s hypothesis that the QMs still play a very important role in governance in the informal sphere and that if included in the FG systems it will generally lead to women’s “substantive” representation.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter finalises the study with a conclusion on its major findings regarding the role of QMs in Ghana. The main import of this paper was to understand the reasons behind the decline in the position and role of FTILs in Ghana. In so doing, the paper tried to first understand the historic and contemporary role of QMs in West Africa by drawing comparative evidence between Ghana and Nigeria. It also traced the factors accounting for the decline in the status/role of QMs; the recent dynamics in queenship and asked the question whether something is being done to empower QMs with a view to them playing an effective role in both the informal and formal governance system in Ghana.

#### 5.1 Major findings

In the first place, regarding the historic role of QMs in Ghana and Nigeria, the findings reveal that generally, even within the patriarchal enclaves of these pre-colonial West African societies, QMs occupied a relatively important place, and played fairly important roles in the governance of these societies. Some of them had their palaces and courts and presided over councils of women. They performed rituals, settled disputes among women, mobilise women for among others. They were also noted to be great warriors who fought fearlessly to defend their communities from enemies including the struggles against the colonial regime. However, with the advent of formal colonial rule, QMs were almost overshadowed following the imposition of the Western governance system and the consequent failure of the colonial regime to recognise the QMs role under the IRS.

But also, the evidence suggest that today the institution of queenship is gaining vibrancy and the coming in to the scene of educated women as QMs is adding a new twist to the role of the institution of queenship and of QMs in Ghana. The study found out that in Ghana some of the primordial functions of the QMs are upheld even today. However, some of them have also been modified and reinforced especially with the active collaboration of internal NGOs and other international development agencies working on women's empowerment in Ghana. Some of the QMs have been actively engaged in the campaign against violence against women and girls, advocacy for girl-child education, the establishment of traditional social safety nets for children orphaned by HIV/ AIDS as well as lobbying government for development projects for their communities.

But on the issue of the QMs political representation it has again emerged that despite the fact the QMs are relatively active in Ghana today, they are still neglected in the formal institutions governance. They have no representation in the DAs, the TCs and way up to the NHC and the Council of State. This situation as it has been seen in the literature is one of the contested issues in Ghana today, especially given the fact that the constitution is still giving more functions and powers to the “all-male” houses of chiefs and TCs across the country. However, the evidence drawn from Nigeria, also highlight

one of the key dilemmas behind the whole idea of representation-the male domination even within the represented institutions.

Related to the above, the study also identified a complex but mutually reinforcing relationship between the legacies of past exclusion and the forces of male power in the decline of queenship in the case of Ghana. While the neglect of QMs in the colonial institutions of governance set the initial pace, subsequent developments point to the fact that forces of male power have played in to the whole equation, leading to a decline in their role in both the FG and IFG institutions in the post-colonial state of Ghana. The findings also suggest that the inter-dependent interaction of factors such as gender and GR, patriarchy, sexual division of power, sexual division of labour and certain cultural norms, beliefs and customs have generally inhibited the role of QMs in the public sphere.

Additionally, it also emerged that most of the past and contemporary roles of QMs are much related to issues of women and motherhood. This paper concludes that there is an implicit gender role differentiation in their functions, and this tends to normalise and reinforce the domestic-rather than public nature of the of the queenship institution.

On the recent dynamics in the institution of Queenship in Ghana, the literature points to a combination of internal and external forces in Ghana as having an empowering effect on QMs. It has been inferred that the global discourse of women's empowerment within the context of good governance has provided legitimate grounds and courage for QMs to challenge the bases of their continuous exclusion in the institutions of governance. Aside this, a number of international agencies, particularly, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Morehouse College, the UU-UNO as well as some NGOs working in Ghana have been instrumental in collectively empowering the QMs to fight for their right and also drawing public attention to their contemporary role. The role of the QMA's and the educated QMs in championing the course of the FTLs cannot be underestimated. With their education and new insight in to developments around the world, the educated QMs have become the vanguards in the struggle for institutional reforms that would give QMs a fair representation and a recognised role in FG in Ghana. The recent addition of the QMs on the government's payroll to take monthly allowances like their male counterparts was also identified as one of the immediate factors, especially for the sudden emergence of queenship in the northern parts of Ghana.

Finally, the study could not deduce adequate evidence to support the hypothesis that the QMs inclusion within the FG institutions will lead to the substantive representation of women in Ghana. First, apart from the relatively important role still played by the QMs, the study produced fairly lack of detailed information on their interaction with the ordinary women in their constituencies. The evidence in the Egba state of Nigeria also suggest that, taking the notion of representation for what it is, stands the risk of confronting one of its major dilemmas; that is reproducing the power inequalities and the consequent domination of the QMs even within the institutions of FG in Ghana.

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## Appendices:

### Appendix 1 (*Table 1*)

#### Women's Occupation And Employment (Economically Active Population 7 Years + )

TYPE OF OCCUPATION	No.	%	TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT	No.	%
Administrative and Managerial	340,114	7.6	Public	190,790	4.3
Clerical and Related	9,543	0.2	Private Formal	260,317	5.8
Sales	83,711	1.9	Private Informal	3,816,635	85.1
Service	343,498	7.7	Semi Public or Parastatal	91,175	2
Agric. Animal and Forestry	2,163,959	48.3			
Prod. And Transport Equipment	590,366	13.2	NGO/Int'l Org.	29,780	0.7
Other	45,821	1	Other	94,304	2.1
Total	4,483,021	100	Total	4,483,021	100

Adapted from Amu (2005) The Role of Women in Ghana's Economy

### Appendix 2 (*Table 2*)

MEMBERSHIP – GHANA NATIONAL HOUSE OF CHIEFS (*ALL MALES)		
NAME	REGION	CONTACT
EASTERN REGION		
1. Oseadeyo Addo Dankwa III	Akuapemhene	020-8176811
2. Nene Narh Dawutey Ologo VI	Konor of Yilo Krobo	0244-4361291
3. Dasebre (Prof.) Oti Boateng II	New Juabenhene	020-8113593
4. Dasebre Akuamoah Boateng II	Kwahumanhene	020-2012252
5. Osagyefo Amoatia Ofori Panin	Akim Abuakwahene	020-21105007
ASHANTI REGION		
1. Dasebre Osei Bonsu II	Mamponghene	020-8158566
2. Nana Ofori Agyemang II	Adansihene	027-7886025
3. Nana Akuoko Sarpong II	Agogohene	0244-4315810
4. Nana Owusu Asiamah II	Oboguhene	0531-25059

UPPER EAST REGION		
1. Naba Asigri Aburago Azoka II	Bawku Naba	0244-4768937
2. Naba Ayidana Simon Asobayire	Kologu-Naba	0244-4298196
3. Pe Charles Awia Awampaga II	Paga-Pio	0244-4806362
4. Naba Martin Adongo Abilba II	Bolga-Naba	072-22333
5. Naba Sigri Bewong	Sekoti Naba	0244-4889178
NORTHERN REGION		
1. Naa Prof. J.S. Nabila(PRESIDENT)	Wulugu-Naba	020-8120999
2. Naa Alhaji Iddrisu Abu	Kumbun-Na	0244-4666323
3. Naa Hamidu Shani II	Sunson-Na	071-22314
4. Nana Kwaku Dapaa II	Bamboi-Koro	----
GREATER ACCRA REGION		
1. Nii Tetteh Out II	Kpone-Mantse	020-8138754
2. Nene Tetteh Djan III	Prampram Mantse	051-28280
3. Nene Abram Kabu Akuoko III	Ada Mantse	0968-22305
4. Nene Klagbordjor Animle V	Osudoku Mantse	0244-4813339
5. Nii Adote Obuor II	Sempe Mantse	020-8134055
BRONG AHAFO REGION		
1. Nana Kwadwo Nyarko III	Pranghene	020-8177378
2. Osahene Kwaku Aterkyi II	Kukuomhene	020-8139060
3. Nana Bosea Gynantwi IV	Drobohene	020-8140462
4. Nana Yaw Kagbrese V	Yejihene	020-8172516
CENTRAL REGION		
1. Nana Kwamena Ansah IV	Eguafohene	020-8160268
2. Nana Kwame Nkyi XII	Assin Apimanimhene	020-8171748
3. Nana Tibu Asare II	Assin Nyakomasehene	----

4. Otumfuo Amoah Sasraku II	Twifu Hemanghene	0244-4512769
VOLTA REGION		
1. Togbega Gabusu	Fiaga of Gbi	020-8160466
2. Togbe Dagadu VII	Fiaga of Akpini	0936-50250
3. Togbe Adja Tekpor VI	Osie of Avatime	0931-22000
4. Togbe Delume	Fiaga of Ve	0935-20067
5. Nana Aburam Akpandja IV	Buemhene	0244-4253422
UPPER WEST REGION		
1. Na Banamini Sandu II	Kaleo Na	024-4220134
2. Kuoro Gibert Badzoe Kanton V	Tumu Kuoro	0756-22196
3. Na Sohimininye Danaah Gore	Dorimon-Na	0756-22196
4. Kuoro Kuri Buktie Liman IV	Gwollu Kuoro	0244-4734253
5. Kuoro Kyigye Mumuni Dimbie II	Wellemelle Kuoro	0756-22196
WESTERN REGION		
1. Kasapreko Kwame Bassanyin	Wassa Amenfhene	020-8138994
2. Awulae Attibrukusu III	Lower Aximhene	020-8120525
3. Nana Atta Kwesi Brembi II	Suamanhene	031-46276
4. Nana Nkua Okumdom II	Sefwi Wiawsohene	020-2112926
5. Odeneho Gyapong Ababio II	Bekwaihene	020-8188444
SOURCE (TABLE 1): Adopted from the official website of the Ghana National House of Chiefs: <a href="http://www.chieftaincy.org/index.php/hoc/12-membershiphoc">http://www.chieftaincy.org/index.php/hoc/12-membershiphoc</a> (Accessed: 02-08-2012)		

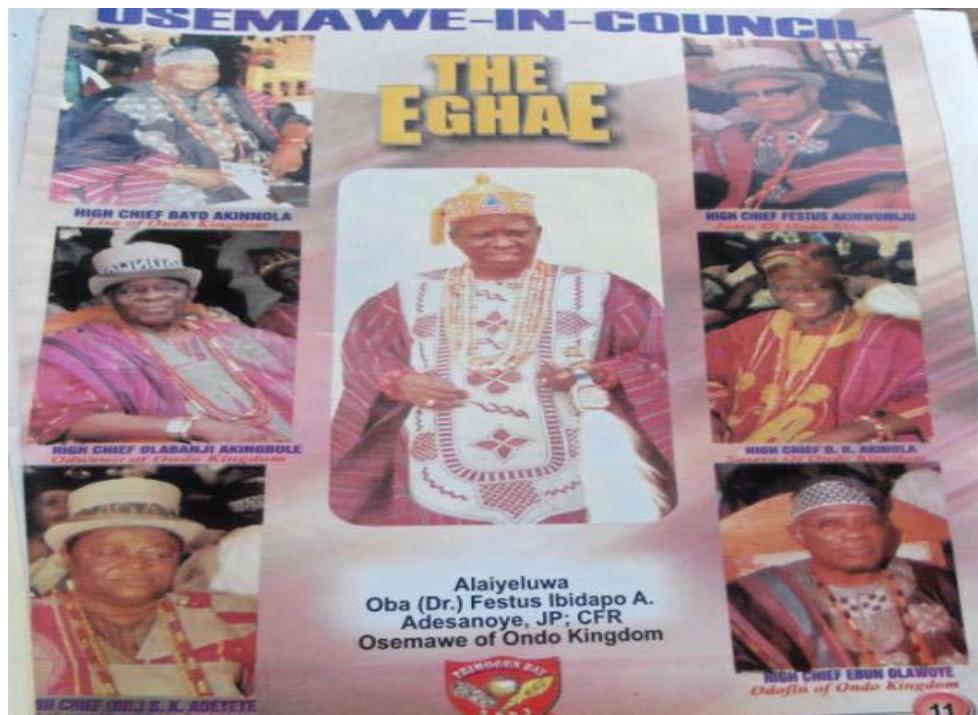
### Appendix 3 (Fig. 1) The Map of Ghana



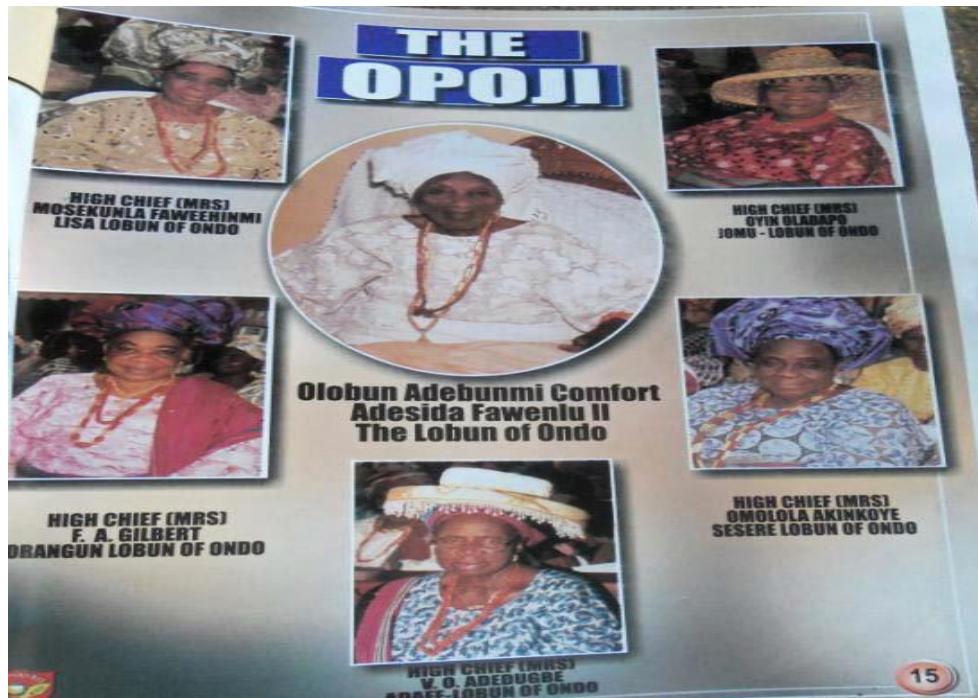
Source: Adapted from Wuripe (2010). The map shows the demarcation of the six regions of Southern Ghana where the institution of queenship is long established. The dotted lines indicate the recent transfer of the institution to the three northern regions of Ghana.

**Appendix 4 (Fig. 2)** Dual-Sex Political Organisation in Some Nigerian Societies (Adapted from Olasupo and Fayomi (2012) Historical Epochs of Local Government Administration in Nigeria: Women and the Poor,' *Global Journal of Human Social Science Arts & Humanities* 12(9.1): 15-17.

*Fig. 2.1: Ondo Male and Female Kings and their King Makers*



*Ondo Male King and his Kingmakers*

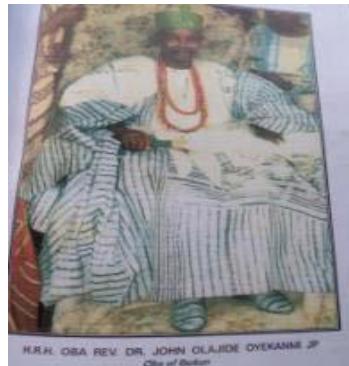


*Ondo Female King and her Kingmakers*

**Fig. 2.2** Male and Female Kingmakers in Ilesha West and East Local Government

**Male Kingmakers**

Obanla  
Ogboni of Ilesha  
Oba-Odo  
Ogboni of Ipole  
Ogboni of Ibokun  
Ogboni of Ijebu-jesa



**Female Kingmakers**

Yeyerisa-Arise  
Yeye Odofin  
Yeye Baodo  
Yeye -dole  
Lejoka  
Loro



Obabinrin Adenike Dununsin Yeye Mojumu (female king) of Ibokun

**Fig 2.3** Male and Female kingmakers in Ibokun, Ori-Ade Local government of Osun State

**Male Kingmakers**

Odofin  
Ejemu  
Aro  
Osolo  
Saba  
Sajuku



Loja of Kajola Ijesha (Oba Omirin)

**Female Kingmakers**

Odofinbinrin  
Ejemubinrin  
Arobinrin  
Osolobinrin  
Sababinrin  
Sajukubinrin



Yeheloobinrin of Kajola Ijesha  
Obabinrin (female king) Elizabeth

**Fig. 2.4**

*Male and Female kingmakers in Kajola Ijesha, Ori-Ade Local government of Osun State*

**Male king**

Baba Orisa  
Baba Odofin  
Baba Aro  
Baba Salaro  
Baba Ejemo

**Female king**

Yeye Orisa  
Yeye Odofin  
Yeye Aro  
Yeye Salaro  
Yeye Ejemo



*Owa Obokun of Ijesha land, Oba Adekunle Aromolaran and Yeyerise (Female king) of Ijesha land, Obabinrin Felicia Modupe Obiwole.*