'QUEENMOTHER' CONCEPT IN THE UPPER WEST REGION OF GHANA: IS THIS ADVANCEMENT OR AN EMERGING CONFLICT WITH TRADITION IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY?

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Abstract

The concept of 'queenmother' is not new in Africa. Scholars have indicated the importance of this institution in Ghanaian traditional political system. With increasing women's empowerment, there is a growing realization that women are co-agents of nation building resulting in the expansion of roles of queen mothers as conduits of development. Consequently, patriarchal societies without queen mothers such as the Upper West Region (UWR) of Ghana are encouraged to install one. While this practice has been going on for centuries in matriarchate, its replication in patriarchates raises questions and concerns. Using interpretative methods involving focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders and elders, this research explored the perceptions and challenges of this emerging concept in the UWR. The concept as practiced in matriarchate has been adopted wholesale into patriarchates and this may have led to the perceived nonfunctional nature of the concept. This concept also conflicts with the traditional and deep-seated cultural values of the people, especially those related to the marriage institution. Furthermore, the perceived roles of queen mothers seem to conflict with those already performed by traditionally recognized 'Tindaamba' and 'pognaaba'. To avoid potential conflicts already existing women leaders (pognaaba) should play the role of 'queenmothers' in these societies.

Keywords: Queen mother, upper west region, development, tradition, conflict

Introduction

The concept of queen mother is not new in African history. It has been in existence in pre-colonial days when kingdoms were organized around the authority of chiefs/kings/queen mothers. Cohen, (1997) wrote about queen mother existence in ancient times and observed that the concept has transformed from pre-colonial through to colonial to present post-colonial and modern times. In studying Akan Kingdom in Ghana and the Pabir Society in Nigeria Cohen (1997) came to the conclusion that, the role of queen mothers was ceremonial, basing his conclusion on the practice of queen mother among Pabir people in Northern Nigeria. However, Farrar (2006) draws a distinction in the roles and authority of queen mothers in a patriarchal and matrilineal society and emphasized that the concept was mostly matriarchate (Van Sertima, 1984; Clarke, 1984; Williams & Finch, 1984). Matriarchate concepts have supporting structures and systems in matrilineal society to assume prominent and relevant authority in the dynamics of the society. A patrilineal society on the other hand has a societal construct that generally favours patriarchate concepts and subordinate matrilineal concepts. Cohen (1997) asserted that in the case of the Pabir people in Northern Nigeria, the queen mother concept was given limited space and was ascribed ceremonial roles because of the patriarchal nature of the society. In the Akan society of Ghana however, queen mothers were accorded respectful and significant roles in the tradition of the people generally because it is matrilineal, thus support a matriarchate concept as queen mother.

Failure of African governments to move development of their countries forward may have led to local chiefs shifting to appointment and promotion of local natives as development leaders. Furthermore, the influence of globalization and women empowerment also may have been compelling societies to strive to find alternative ways and mechanisms to increase development potentials (Kaivan & Rosenzweig, 2006). One of these ways is creating space for women participation in public leadership to compliment the efforts of their male counterparts and government in nation building. The ability of women to take up these roles is influenced by empowerment and gender-mainstreaming efforts that have taken place (Rao & Kelleher, 2005).

Since it was a known fact that women and children are vulnerable groups in African societies (for example, The United Nations Children's Fund, 2006), 'queenmothership' was identified as an appropriate institution to champion their welfare. Areas that did not have queen mothers were encouraged by advocates of women empowerment to install them in order to increase efforts at addressing vulnerability as part of general developmental agenda. These efforts contributed in bringing back the recognition of queen

mothers as development agent particularly in matrilineal societies. Existing queen mothers were upgraded to take up public roles in addition to their traditional roles. Stoeltje (2003) explains how globalization and external sources have 'discovered' queen mothers in the Ashanti Kingdom, who were ignored and relegated to the background in public development discourse by colonial rule. Discovery of queen mothers is in the context of addressing new development challenges. Therefore, they are assigned leadership roles in community projects and other roles in public life.

The Upper West Region of Ghana, a typical patriarchal society did not have the concept of queen mother as part of its public and traditional institutions. In recent times, they have been calls from women empowerment advocates and other development organizations such as Action Aid Ghana (AAG) and the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) for the introduction of this concept in the otherwise patriarchal society (see http://www.modernghana.com/news/296328/1/upper-west-chiefs-asked-to-support-the-institution.html). Considering the magnitude of this development in the socio-cultural context of the Upper West region, it is imperative that we understand the potential challenges and how it may actually function with a very strong patriarchy. As expected of most new concepts, there may be implementation challenges. Therefore, we ask the question: 'Queenmother' Concept in the Upper West Region of Ghana: Is this Advancement or an Emerging Conflict with Tradition in a Patriarchal Society, for us to understand the concept as it is practiced in a patriarchal society. The paper also wants to understand the twist in the tradition, which allowed for the practice of the concept, and possible conflict it may create in the traditional marriage and pognaaba (women leaders) institutions for the purpose of trimming off rough edges of the concept in Upper West Region.

The Upper West Region (Study Area)

The Upper West Region was delineated out of the then Upper Region in 1983. It is the youngest region and with an estimated landmass of 18,476 square kilometers. In comparison with other regions in the country, it is the 7th largest. The region is located in the Northwestern corner of the country and shares boundary with Burkina Faso to the North and West, the Upper East Region to the East, and Northern Region to the South. Administratively, the region is divided into eleven (11) districts: Wa Municipal, Wa West, Wa East, Nadowli, Jirapa, Lambussie-Karni, Lawra, Nandom, Sissala East and West Districts. Chieftaincy institution is significant in mobilizing people and resources for the development of the region and has remained the custodian of the culture and traditions of the people of the region. There are twenty-one (21) paramountcies in the region. According to the 2010 Population and

Housing Census, the region has a population of 702,110 with a sex ratio of 94.5 men to every 100 women. Dagaaba is the major ethnic group in the region, and occupies the Jirapa, Lawra, Nandom, Nadowli/Kaleo, and Daffiama/Busie/Issah Districts. In the Wa Municipal, Wa West and Labussie/Karni Districts, Dagaaba are in significant numbers. The Upper West Region is a patriarchal society where male dominate in socio-cultural, and economic activities to some extend, as they control production factors such as land (Songsore, 2011).

Traditional Political System and Marriage in Upper West Region
Tindaamba (First Settlers)

The Dagaaba Society in the Upper West Region before the infiltration of colonization had a well structured, decentralized and democratic political authority (Alenuma, 2002; Yelpaala, 1992). Every community, 'tenge' referred to in the works of Goody (1962; 1972) was ruled by a group of elders led by the 'tindaana'. The Tindaamba (plural of tindaana) were the first settlers in every tenge. These Tindaamba were persons who were in constant communication with the gods and ancestors of the community on every significant matter in their life (Kpieta & Bonye, 2012). A significant observation made by scholars is that, the tindaamba family in every community selected a male individual to lead. This individual was somebody who was morality upright and was well vested in the culture and tradition of the people. The tindaana, upon assuming office, selected elders to form the traditional council. There was no instance where a woman was selected to be part of the traditional counsel of any tenge. In fact, the presence of a woman in the deliberations of the traditional council was a serious infraction on the traditional norms of the tenge. Scholars such as Kpieta and Bonye (2012); Songsore, (2011); Kuwabong, Some, Bodomo, & Hiraiwa (2004) and Alenuma, (2002) have written extensively on the composition and functions of the traditional council.

The elders in most cases are representatives of the various families and sections in the tenge. These elders formed the council of elders who performed executive (administrative) role in the community in a way that the community was mobilized for communal level activities. The elders are the rallying points for activities such as communal farming activities like 'kangme' (trashing of harvested grains), performance of festivals and rituals. The traditional council also performs law-making roles in the community. All laws and norms are made in consultation with the 'kpinne' - the spirits of the land or the gods of the ancestors. This makes the laws of the community sacrosanct and all members of the community try to obey them. Although the laws and norms were not written down, they were passed on from generation to generation through an intricate socialization process. Any changes to a law

or 'promulgation' of a new law were announced to members of the community using the 'daworo'. There were also judiciary functions performed by the council of elders. According to Kuwabong and associates (2004), in the event that a member of the community goes against the norms of the people, it is the tendaana who would prescribe what the sanction should be and what commodities; mostly livestock; would be used to appease the gods. Kpieta and Bonye, 2012 explained that the tenge is kept cleansed, harmonious and in good terms with the kpinne through this practice.

In the process of keeping in touch with the spirits of the land or the gods of the ancestors and the kpinne, the tendaana is responsible for performing all the rituals and interceding on behalf of the community for the blessings and mercies of the spirits (Kpieta and Bonye 2012). He is responsible for periodic rituals to the ancestors' spirits and the gods, mostly at the beginning and at the end of the farming year. Also, in difficult times, for instance when rain is sporadic or when a bad omen befell the community, the tindaana would consult the spirits and perform the sacrifice prescribed by them. The tindaana was therefore, both the social and spiritual leader of the people.

The Chieftaincy Institution

In the colonial era, chiefs were important part of indirect rule embarked by the colonial rulers. Every community had a chief to take down the instructions of the colonial government. In the Upper West Region, at least among the Dagaaba, where there were no chiefs, the colonial government caused for the creation of the chieftaincy institution in the region. The traditional council, which existed long before the colonial rule decided to give the chieftaincy title to late settlers in communities who normally were not part of the leadership of the traditional council. Therefore, royal families right at the beginning of the chieftaincy institution among the Dagaaba were for the late settlers who could not have become the tendaana (Lentz, 1994; Kpieta & Bonye 2012).

The new institution in the life of the Dagaaba did not change the political structure. The chieftaincy institution was rather made a ceremonial one, while the tendaamba still exercised their mandate as leaders of the traditional councils and the spiritual leaders (Kpieta & Bonye, 2012). The tendaamba within the ambit of their leadership assumed the responsibility of having the final say in the selection of the chief. Therefore, the chief in the patriarchal Dagaaba community did not hold as much authority as their colleague chiefs in other ethnic groups such as the Gonjas and the Dagombas of Northern Ghana, where chieftaincy exited before colonial times. In this new institution there were still limited role played by women.

The Marriage Institution

Marriage among the people of the Upper West Region is a solemn institution that establishes relationship between people and clans. In conformity with the practices of patriarchate, the woman leaves her kinsmen and goes to stay with her in-laws/husband in marriage. She is considered part of the family of the husband and only visits the agnatic kin during festivals, funerals, and sickness or in times of calamity. When a woman is duely married, she is accorded a lot of respect as long as she is able to stay with the husband and the husband's kin. The Dagaaba community abhors a woman who frequents the agnatic kin. In most times, the leader of the family and elder women in the family will question and scold her when she spent a number of days in her father's house (Naaeke, 2010).

A properly married woman in the context of the Upper West Region is one whose marriage rituals and sacrifices have been performed (Yiridoe, 1995). The rituals differ from tribe to tribe and even differ slightly from community to community within the same tribe. But in most cases, livestock, cash and cowries are used. As long as the marriage rituals are not undone, the woman remains a wife of her husband's community and belongs to that community till death. At death, the agnatic kin of the woman is informed of the death and following that they go to sympathize with the husband's family. In a situation where the woman was no longer staying in the husband's house, it is still the responsibility of the husband's family to perform the funeral and bury the corpse in their community (Alenuma, 2002). Women who are married into a community play critical role in the wellbeing of their husbands' families and the community as a whole. This responsibility makes married women important agents of development in their husbands' communities and not their agnatic families and communities.

The Pognaa/Magazie

The Dagaaba provide recognition of women leaders in the traditional setting. Women from various sections identify elderly women, mostly of high standing in the value system of the community and who have the ability to mobilize their fellow women as their leaders. These are women respected by their women folk as role models in womanhood. This group of women from the various sections of the community also identifies one of them as the women leader in the community. As noted in the previous section, daughters of the community are not considered women of the community and cannot be selected as women leaders. Among the Dagaaaba, this woman leader is called the 'pognaa', literary meaning; 'women chief'. In the context of the language, 'naa' does not necessarily mean chief/king but it signifies a role of leadership among a group of people. To some extent, it represents a lordship

position. The pognaa is considered the leader of the women and usually represent women in all community activities (Alenuma, 2002).

The Pognaa institution may have been created to give women a representation in their community development discourse. With the onset of Western form of women empowerment agenda, the pognaa serves as the face of women in the community and she is mostly used in mobilizing women for empowerment activities (Nanbigne, 2003). In practical sense, pognaa and magazie mean the same. The role of pognaa has increasingly become important within the current development agenda that recognizes the contribution of both men and women. Moreover, contribution of wives of the community is traditionally accepted and not the contribution of daughters because of the deep-seated cultural values on marriage, that a married woman belongs to the husband's community, spends her entire life in that community and contributes the best of her ability to the development of that community. An attempt to divert development to her agnatic kin is frowned on. Such a practice may remain a dark spot in the relationship between the two families and clans. Therefore, unlike the Akan queen mother, the pognaa is selected as women leader in her husband's community to contribute to the development of that community (Alenuma, 2002).

Methods

The research took a qualitative approach considering the subjective nature of the queen mother concept and the different value system that is applied to it in different societies (Merriam, 2002; Bryman, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2004). Maxwell (2008) and Yin (2009) describe qualitative research method as an appropriate design for studying different perspectives of human society. They stated that qualitative research design is so flexible that it allows for a non-sequential roll-out of research, thereby creating a condition for reshaping and refocusing of the stages of the research in order to make meaning of the research results. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-depth Interviews were used in collecting data in November and December 2012.

In-depth Interview

Crabtree & Miller (2004) explained that in-depth interview, as a method of data collection, is a means of obtaining knowledge from an individual in an interactive manner. In-depth interviews are open-ended, discovery orientated, and in a form of conversations (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). According to DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006), they are meant to be personal and intimate encounters with respondents for the purpose of capturing operational expressions, flagship statements, highlighting comments, stories and narrations. Interviews were guided by the

objective of the research, which was to understand respondents' feelings, perspectives and experiences about the phenomenon under study.

In order to overcome language barrier, which could have hindered conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003), an experienced facilitator conducted all the interviews in Dagaare (the local Language) with the help of a checklist serving as a guide. Notable questions on the checklist were: "What is the queen mother concept in the Upper West Region and how did it come about?" "What are the roles and responsibilities of the queen mother within your society?" "How functional are queen mothers in the context of the performance of their set out roles and responsibilities?" And "what challenges are associated with the queen mother concept in your society?" All interviews were conducted at the homes of respondents, making them confident and confortable for the interview.

Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a rapid assessment, semi-structured data gathering method in which a purposively selected set of participants gather to discuss issues and concerns based on a list of key themes drawn up by the researcher/facilitator (Kumar, 1987). FGD provided an added dimension of interaction among members of the group (Wong, 2008), to the extent that it is described as a prototype of society, illustrating diverse interactions and conversations among members (Kidd & Parshall, 2000).

Nine FGDs (three in every community) were conducted in the three communities: one for married men only, one for married women only, and the third for traditional leaders in the community. These categories of persons were chosen based on their depth of experience on traditional political system, the marriage institution, and development among the Dagaaba. The number of participants for each focus group was less than nine to order to maximize interaction and discussion among members of the group. FGD were took place outside in the communities meeting grounds (mostly under shady trees) and were conducted in Dagaare and led by an experience facilitated with strong understanding of the language. A semi-structured checklist covering thematic questions similar to those asked in in-depth interviews guided discussions.

Sample Selection

To ensure varied opinions and perspectives from different shades of society, males (n=42) and females (n=27) who satisfied the criteria for selection were recruited for data collection. Interview participants were three (3) newly installed queen mothers, three (3) magazies and three (6)

traditional leaders from Kaleo, Daffiama and Lyssa. A queen mother, a magazia and two traditional leaders were selected from each community. Selection of these communities and participants was informed by three factors: communities with queen mothers installed for at least a year before the research, communities where magazies exist along side queen mothers, and where chiefs already exist. The overarching criterion was that participants had in-depth experience and understanding of traditional political system and queen mother concept in the study area. Recruitment of participants for FGDs was based on the condition that, the participant was a married man, a married woman, or a traditional leader. Community leaders and women leaders were first contacts in the communities in identifying possible participants and purposive sampling was used in recruiting final participants. Table 1 below shows participants for FGD and In-depth Interviews.

Table 1 Characteristics of study samples by groups

Characteristics	Male	Female	Total
Sample size	42 (60.9%)	27 (39.1%)	69
IDIs	6 (50%)	6 (50%)	12 (17.4%)
FGDs	36 (63.2%)	21 (36.8%)	57 (82.6%)
Marital Status			
Married/Partner	34 (60.7%)	22 (39.3%)	56 (81.2%)
Widowed/separated	8 (61.5%)	5 (38.5%)	13 (18.8%)
Mean age	48.4	43.3	46.5
Education			
No formal education	29 (59.2%)	20 (40.8%)	49 (71.0%)
Some/completed basic education	9 (75.0%)	3 (25.0%)	12 (17.4%)
Some/completed second cycle education	3 (75.0%)	1 (25.0%)	4 (5.8%)
Some/completed tertiary education	1 (25.0%)	3 (75.0%)	4 (5.8%)
Status of authority			
Traditional leader	18 (75.0%)	6 (25.0%)	24 (34.8%)
Not traditional leader	24 (53.3%)	21 (46.7%)	45 (65.2%)

Source: Field study, 2012

Analysis

The data was analyzed qualitatively using Nvivo and findings presented in tables, quotes and graphs to give a vivid picture of the results. In the analysis process, the data was first organized and coded. Along the coding process, running themes were identified (Crang, (2005; Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Coded data were uploaded onto Nvivo and analyzed. The output of the analysis was in descriptive form, providing the number of times a particular issue was mentioned in all in-depth interviews and FGDs used in the data collection process.

Results

Findings from the study are organized around the main objectives and themes that emerged from analysis: the new queen mother concept and areas of conflict between the new concept and traditional institutions. Explicit quotations from interviews and FGDs are used in providing meaning to findings and also illustrate vivid perspectives of respondents.

The New Queen mother Concept in Upper West Region
Its Origins and Purpose

Overall, participants indicated that the origins of the Mconcept could be traced to the work of NGOs and gender activists. Men suggested that empowerment activities prepared grounds for its introduction. A traditional leader in an interview said:

I see the origin of this new concept coming from what NGOs have been doing in the region. Years ago, we could not have this, but because our minds have been worked on, some of our elders and chiefs accepted it and started it. (M, 59, AP).

It was evident that although women also attributed the origin to empowerment activities by NGOs, particular role of chiefs and traditional leaders in the establishment of the concept was recognized. A woman in a focus group discussion explained that:

We, as women, know long ago that we have a role in the governance of our community, but because men did not give us the opportunity, we could not do anything… Now that they have realized the importance of queen mother, they have supported us to have that position. (F, 46, FG).

For a patriarchy such as the Upper West Region, male dominance is obvious. Societal systems support male dominance and to bring about women active participation, male support was required. Not only that, men needed to play a direct role in establishing and safe guiding the concept to concretize. Emerging from FGDs and interviews, it was evident that men, particularly chiefs actually signed off the institutionalization of the concept in the region. A chief during in-depth interview explained the processes that brought about the concept.

…we were invited to a forum by the regional house of chiefs to discuss how we can also practice queen mother concept in the region. We were told that the absence of queen mother concept in the region was blocking a lot of development to the region. Southern Ghana, where the concept is practiced, was used as an example. I realized that the programme was supported by NGOs, so I believed what I was hearing. At the end of the programme, we signed an MOU, committing ourselves to the implementation of the concept. (M, 67, NB).

This may be the signature that gave birth to the concept in the region. With the support of the regional house of chiefs and Action Aid Ghana, the concept became a new agenda in the region.

Moreover, participants indicated that the need for greater participation of women in development influenced the birth of the concept. Coming from the context where women were given a subordinate position, and against the backdrop that communities have to increase efforts at development, the creation of queen mothers may be considered a significant step in the development path of Dagaaba. A comment from a FGD summarized the relevance of the concept:

…if we had only a chief trying to bring development and we are not still there, maybe if a women is added to him, we may be able to move faster. That is why, even in our society, marriage is considered important because two people join efforts to develop themselves. They are considered more successful than if they were to stay singles. (M, 61, DN).

More so, participants particularly newly installed queen mothers, expressed their excitement and optimism about the development prospects of the new institution. They explained that instituting the concept is a landmark achievement in the development journey of Dagaaba and they believe that would foster a more inclusive development agenda. Furthermore, it was revealed that the concept institutionalized a formal system for mobilizing women issues and concerns for redress in communities. Previously, women did not have a formalized community structure to advance their issues.

Queen Mother Selection and Installation Processes

Generally, participants emphasized the semblance of the installation process to what happens in the Akan society. They actually concluded that the process was a complete wholesale of the processes as pertains in the Akan society and explained the qualification criteria as: the candidate must be a daughter of a royal family in the community, must be a respected person and an achiever, must have mobilization skills, and must have the ability to represent and articulate women agenda on platforms.

With regards to the process, it emerged from interviews and FGDs that the first step is announcement of the vacant queen mother position by the chief of the community. Following that, qualified persons express interest by going to pay visit to the chief and his council of elders. After which the chief and his council of elders consults widely on the suitability of the candidates and subsequently announce one of them as the queen mother nominated and also a date for outdooring. A queen mother in an in-depth interview explained:

Before nominations were made, I had already contacted all the prominent women to get their support my candidature. So, when it was

public that we could express our intention, I was the only person who stepped forward. In such a case, the council of elders had no other choice. But in some communities, a number of people expressed interest and the traditional council decided on who was more qualified for the position. (F, 52, AB).

A chief in a FGD summarized the outdooring activity:

The event is a festive occasion, another opportunity to show the rich culture of the people… There is no traditional rite associated with it because 'queenmothership' is alien to our culture. So, the queen makers and the people pick some lessons from the Akan. The candidate is considered duly installed at the end of the day's activities. (M, 59, ND).

Queen Mother Roles

Participants explained that the primary roles of the queen mother was to mobilize women to engage in activities that inure to development of the community, create and maintain active women groups, and provide direction and support to women to realize their aspirations. These are very similar to role performed by queen mothers in the Akan society, where she leads all women groups and work hard to ensure they stay active and achieving their set out goals (Boaten, 1991). Besides, it was revealed that the queen mother is expected to partner the chief in the development effort of the community. With that she is supposed to work closely with the chief on every developmental course and provide technical support in her areas of competencies. A traditional leader explained in an in-depth interview that the queen mother sitting with the chief and elders in public gatherings shows the partnership between the chief and queen mother. However, a traditional leader explained that the qneenmother does not sit next to the chief because:

Sitting on stage outside is a semblance of the stage in the palace. Therefore, the queen mother who is not part of the stage in the palace cannot be part of the stage outside. (M, 62, DF).

Furthermore, it was indicated that the queen mother has some powers of adjudication. The chief assigns the queen mother to attend to issues that bother on women affairs. Conflict among women at water points (borehole, or river side), over shea nut collection on the farms or between rivalry wives, the queen mother is considered the appropriate person to rule on such matters. Again, this conforms to the practice among the Akans where the queen mother sits over matters that border on women in particular; though she can contribute to trials led by the chief (Rattray, 1956).

Areas of Conflict Posed by Emerging Queen Mother Concept

Notwithstanding the potentials of the queen mother institution in advancing women's interest and development, the study observes significant

tension and conflict that challenge traditional institutions such as the marriage and family, and the 'pognaaba' institutions.

Conflict with Marriage and Family Institution

It emerged from the study that the queen mother concept as practiced now, where a daughter becomes the queen mother, is creating tension and conflict in the marriage and family institution. As a way of context, marriage among Dagaaba has significant cultural relevance. As illustrated in an earlier section, dowry is the most important aspect of marriage. When it is accepted by the kin of a woman, the marriage is considered validly conducted. In such a situation the kin of the woman accepts the traditional considerations that the woman thereafter belongs to the kin of the husband and would work towards the advancement of the husband's family and community. Children from the marriage belong to their father's family and inherit form there. In the Akan society however, where matrilineal system is practiced, children belong to their mother's family and community and inherit from there. Therefore, development of the women's kin and community is the responsibility of the woman and her brothers. Hence, the situation where the queen mother is a daughter makes sense in a matrilineal society. However in a patriarchal society, the practice creates conflict and sets up tensions in families. According to an elderly lady in a FGD:

The practice is not serving a good precedence to the young ladies in our society. When we were young, the worth of a woman was the extent to which she was able to groom her children and support her husband to build a successful family. These days, the practicing of this new concept motivats young women to pay more attention to their communities of origin but not their husbands' and that is resulting in complications in marriages. Even women do not value marriages as it was in the past just because of some of these upsurd practices. (F, 59, PD).

Besides, participants explained that wives remain natives of their husbands' families even at death. Traditionally, the funeral of a wife who is properly married (with dowry given) is performed in the husband's territorial land. Even when the women was staying outside her marital home, as long as the dowry is not return to the husband's family, her corpse is buried in the husband's homeland. In the context where daughters are crowned queen mothers, in the event of their death, will her parents allow the husband's kin to perform the funeral and bury the corpse as an ordinary wife or they would insist to perform the funeral and burial as their queen mother in her father's house. This was the response from a tindaana when he was asked this question:

That is the difficulty with what we are practicing. The funeral would be performed in the husband's place. On how the funeral would be

performed, I would say that would depend on what the husbands decide. They could invite the kin of the wife to make the funeral a big one. But even that, the funeral and the burial cannot be attached to any traditional practices from the husband's origin. (M, 61, VG).

Role conflict with Pognaa Institution

The study observed that the position of the pognaa is being taken over by the queen mother. Among married women in the community, the feeling is that the leadership of their pognaa is being taken away from them and given to the daughters of the community, which they are not comfortable about. They see the leadership of the community forcing a person on them as their leader, who in some cases is not a woman admired by the wives of the community. Whereas the concept of queen mother is seen as an empowerment, wives consider it as another attempt by men to deny their wives of occupying any leadership position and locking them down into subordinate positions. It is revealing how an emerging concept that is meant to strengthen women's roles is rather creating conflict among women fold. A young wife interviewed poured out her frustration about the way the queen mother concept is being practiced.

I don't know what this is all about. I think our husbands are again putting us down in favour of their daughters and sisters. But for me, I know my leader. It is still xxxx and we will continue to give her the support she requires as our leader. We are not ready to accept any stranger as our women leader (F, 34, PB).

It is instructive how leadership among women is built. Married women tend to identify each other as sisters based on the principle that they are married to the same place. They tend to act as each other's keeper.

Discussion and Conclusion

The concept of queen mother in a patriarchal society such as the Upper West Regions is definitely a radical approach to empower women and bring them into mainstream governance and participation in decision-making process. It has the advantage of propelling, not just the development of women, but development in all fabric of life in the Upper West Region. Significantly the concept has the potential of influencing development to become more inclusive, taking onboard interest and developmental needs of excluded groups such as women.

However, our position is that it is very difficult to implement in a patriarchal society with the daughter of a community occupying the position of a queen mother. The study revealed that the concept as practiced in the Akan society cannot be implemented wholesale in the Upper West Region based on the varied cultural orientations. We restate the position that the

practice as it is now, goes to shake the very foundation of marriage and family institution of the Dagaaba, which has been a very revered institution among them. It also creates a condition for usurping the roles of the pognaa, creating conflict among women and causing division in the women front. Therefore, although it may be advancement with specific respect to women participation in governance and a good tool for achieving inclusive development, it does not conform to deep-seated cultural persuasion of the people, hence conflicts with the tradition of the people.

We recommend a rethinking and redesigning of the concept to conform to the traditions of the people. On that score, we strongly make the recommendation that the pognaa institution should be upgraded to become the queen mother. After all, 'pognaa' in the tradition of the Dagaaba means the chief of women, and she is already mobilizing women for development, representing them at fora and articulating the interests and concerns of women. She is also the person creating harmony and building a common front for women in the community. The only modification to the position of the pognaa needed is to upgrade her authority beyond just women affairs to include some jurisdictions of community development that involve men. She would have to draw her authority not just from the women of the community but from the chief and the tendaana as well. Apart from the allocation of authority, the pognaa could be outdoored as the development queen mother of the community, giving her public recognition and responsibilities within the community.

We have observed three main positives about making the pognaa the queen mother. First of all, it will sustain the marriage institution and puts it in the place that it deserves in the tradition of the people. The shocks that the current practice is causing in the marriage institution will not arise. Having Pognaa as the 'Queen Mother' will espouse the positive sides of motherhood and womanhood, which will serve as motivation and inspiration to young girls, mothers and wives among the Dagaaba People. Further, tensions in families regarding the loyalty of wives would not arise, likewise tensions between in-laws. Similarly, cultural significance of the dowry among the Dagaaba would be reinforced. Secondly, upgrading pognaa to a queen mother position would prevent the situation where a parallel institution could be created; hence development would be endogenous; within the socio-cultural settings of the people and responding to the development needs of the people without compromising the existence of any of the traditional institutions. Thirdly, there would not be a difficulty in succession since there are already guidelines and mechanisms of selecting pagnaa, which can be applied in respect of the queen mother. In all, the concept of queen mother, when approach from the perspective of the pognaa will be enriching the culture and traditions of the people. It will also be promoting the

participation of women within traditionally recognized institutions, which could serve as leverage for women empowerment.

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