

Female Chiefs in Dagbon Traditional Area: Role and Challenges in the Northern Region of Ghana

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ABSTRACT: *Traditional forms of leadership are many and varied globally and throughout the continent of Africa, chieftaincy institution has recognized only male chiefs, (Von Trotha, 1996 & Engelbranner-Koff et al 1995). However, literature points to the existence of female chiefs since the ancient times but the question still remains especially, the role these chiefs play in the socio-economic and cultural development of their traditional areas. This study sought to ascertain the existence of female chiefs in Dagbon Traditional Area and the role they play in sociocultural and economic development of Northern Region of Ghana. Qualitative methods descriptive statistics and processes were used which included interviews, observations and focus group discussions and percentages for the primary data. The targeted population were Traditional Authority (Chiefs, their Elders, Tindanas, Magazias), Drum historians, People with special knowledge on the matter and the Community elders from the study areas. Data collected were analysed through the process of Thematic Content Analysis and guided by sociological theories such as Social Role Theory, Role Congruity Theory, Sociocultural Theory and Functionalists Theory. The results showed that the qualification and the selection or nomination for a title as female chief was based on lineage either a daughter or granddaughter of the overlord (Ya Naa). They assumed important sociocultural, spiritual and political roles especially, during funerals of the King of Dagbon and some other selected chiefs as well as during festivities. They are bedeviled with a lot of challenges including lack of recognition, support in terms of finances, ill-treatment by their female counterparts and humiliation. It is recommended that Regional and National Houses of Chiefs and the District Assemblies as a matter of urgency support female chiefs with quarterly allowances and sensitization of the public by district assemblies to realise the importance of female chiefs in the development of the traditional area.*

KEYWORDS: female-chiefs, development, traditional authorities, challenges,

INTRODUCTION

Traditional leadership is where individuals are nominated to a traditional governance position through laid down prevailing customary laws and practices (His Royal Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, 2004). They preside over the traditional institutions in their areas. Traditional authorities refer to the leadership structures (Chiefs, Council of elders, King makers, Tindanas or land owners, Magazias or women leaders, Princes/princesses, Soothsayers, Rain makers, Diviners, Clan, Sectional, Household as well as Opinion Leaders), in the society which are by tradition and practices ascribed (traditional) to give the necessary leadership to ensure that the norms, practices, and values of the community are accepted (Mohammed-Katerere, 2004). In this study, traditional authorities include, Chiefs, their Councils of Elders, Tindanas and Magazias. These individuals may come from the royal family/lineage (ascribed chiefly groups), who can easily become chief through heredity or through hard work/achievement or appreciation (non- ascribed) (His Royal Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, 2004). These leaders live with their subjects in a traditional area. A traditional area is a group of cities, villages, towns or communities each of which have elected/chosen chief or leader who acknowledges their relationship to one another and a joint loyalty to supreme paramount Chief or Queen (Amenumey, 1982). This study looks at ascribed leadership or authority of female chieftaincy among Dagombas of Ghana.

A chief in the pre-colonial era was one who in accordance with the tradition had been chosen and enskinned as a leader as the case may be, chosen and installed as such (Dankwa III, 2014). This then meant that one could never become a chief if the customs and tradition of the community did not believe the person was fit for the position. Chief in the colonial era was someone in accordance with custom, who had been nominated as a leader and installed as such and who, for the time being recognized by the government (Dankwa III, 2004). Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1970), defined a chief after the colonial era as the administration and judiciary head of given location, conferred with last economic and legal mechanism over land within his frontiers and everyone in this boundary is his/her people.

Act 1971, Act 370 of Ghana's Chieftaincy states; "A chief is a person who has been validly nominated, and enskinned as a Chief or queen mother in agreement with necessary applicable customary law and practices, or the case may be, chosen and enskinned as such and whose name appears for the time being as a Chief in the register of chiefs". Acemoglu et al (2013) defined a chief as someone who is from one of the ruling families and recognized by the central government. In the same vein Arhin (1985 cited in Kwame, 2012) also noted that a chief is an individual nominated and enskinned in line with the custom and recognized by the central government to possess power and perform functions resulting from custom or given by the government within a specific area.

The 1979 constitution made some changes to who a chief was and included the possibility of a woman ruling, although that assertion was not so clear. It nonetheless incorporated the existence of female leadership in the Ghanaian chieftaincy institution which had been previously left out in

the many definitions that came before that time. The definition became; “A chief is a person who hails from the appropriate lineage and has been validly selected and installed as a chief/queen mother, as the case may be appointed and installed as such in according to the necessary applicable customary law and usage” (Dankwa III, 2004).

Constitution of the Republic of Ghana’s 1992, gave different definition of who is a chief. The 1992 of Article 277 of the Constitution of the Republic defines chief as “a person who hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, who has been validly nominated, chosen, enskinned, as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary laws and usages” (277, p 16). Arhin (1973) also sees a chief in the Ghanaian context as someone validly nominated in accordance with customary usage and accepted by Ghana government to exercise power and perform duties assigned by the central government in a specified area. The 1992 constitution does not require governmental recognition. Institution has been well-defined and agreed differently by varied writers. Bacho (2004) refers to it as the collective accepted on social arrangement to rule the exchanges between members of a particular group of people. Bacho (2004) again argues that the institutions can evolve over period, reflecting time and area experiences of the group. For example family groups; not formal groups connected by some interest that tend to interrelate all the time.

Awedoba (2003) indicated that chieftaincy is a derivative from the word chief and denotes to the office and the institution of which the chief is the major worker and stakeholder. Chieftaincy comprises among other things the following: the personnel holding offices such as chiefs, council of elders and staff, rituals symbols, queen mothers, such as shrines and other objects, the symbols of office such as stools, skins, regalia, crowns, gowns, and staffs such as the linguist staff, swords and various paraphernalia. Properties like land are sometimes attached to the office and in some cases each incumbent chief are expected to take good management and also protect this land for the title. The office of chieftaincy can be said to be greater than the chief or the individual ruler. A traditional leader, when enskinned as a chief will stay in the office for life but this modern democratically elected leaders or governments have fixed tenure of office usually back by constitutional requirement (Awedoba, 2003).

Chieftaincy therefore depends on a community’s custom, tradition and the installation or removal of a chief from office could be done by members of that community only. Lord Chalmers (1872) described the chieftaincy institution in this manner, “Every community has its headman who performs a sort of male leadership over his few people; he further does his country dweller, is subject to selected chief, who has control over three, four, five villages and this ruler is again subject to the chief or ruler of a large district.

In Africa and Ghana in particular, the chieftaincy institution is said to be the maximum observable and important form of traditional leadership amongst many tribes found in this country (Akron, 2006). Chieftaincy establishment as well as the definition of who a chief is has gone through many periods in the places where it still exists. For many groups, the chief identifies their beliefs, fears, hopes and aspirations; and functions as a religious, administrative, legislative, cultural, military and judicial head (Abotchie, 2006; Wilks, 1975).

The chieftaincy institution existed in Ghana before the coming of European rulers at the time of the 19th century, when Ghana did not exist as a nation. Instead, there were, in the geographical location now called Ghana, many ethnic groups that organized themselves within their own politics. In other parts of the world including Ghana, the institution chieftaincy is one of the few traditions that still transpire in the history of mankind regardless of the inflow of western cultures and its resultant neglect and reject of some Africa and Ghanaian cultures and traditions. Chieftaincy in Ghana and other parts of the world is known to be a male dominated sphere. However, there have been few females in this area. These females hold chieftaincy positions not only as queen mothers but also as substantive female chiefs. They have councils of elders and often even have queen mothers as well (Odotei, 2006). Ghana has communities with female chiefs and queens' mothers. The duties of queen mothers in southern Ghana include her having authority over women of the family, town or kingdom or chiefdom and widely responsible for selecting a new chief/King and can also impeach the chief if necessary. She also announces the successor after death or destoolment of a chief. She also sits in council and takes part in decision making and she is the only person who can reprimand the chief publicly and the council. She further advises chiefs and also acts as moral leader of the community.

The seeming absence of clearly defined similar leadership roles of a queen mother in some parts of the North in Ghana put the impression that women from these parts did not have any leadership roles in the past and in present times. It has been discovered that women played some leadership roles in the past and still play in traditional political systems in their respective traditional places. Some chiefly positions or communities are reserved for only females in the traditional authority system of their respective places. These female chiefs have authority over their communities just like their male counterparts. For a woman to be appointed a chief she needs to satisfy some requirements to allow her to be enskinned/installed just like the men. Women leaders, though not as many as men, are recognized by their different traditions and cultures and have a role to play in modern day Ghana.

Female chiefs in Northern Ghana

The negative perceptions of the traditional roles of women in the Northern part of Ghana have made very few of the female chiefs to be seen as chiefs. These chiefs include Puanaba Akuolug of Gumbo Divisional area of Upper West Region of Ghana and Pognaba Abeliwine Dalin, Paramount Queen of Bongo of Upper East Region of Ghana. Some ethnic groups in the north have reserved certain communities for women to be enskinned as chief. The Nanumba have Kpandigli, Kpalga and Bimbilla as their female chiefs, whilst the Mamprugu have Dindani-Tamboku and Samni (Odotei, 2006). Among Dagombas, are skins reserved for daughters and granddaughters of the King (Ya Na). They include: Gundogu, Kpatuya, Kugulogu and a few others. These women assume essential legislative, executive, social, political and spiritual/ritual roles to ensure social development in their communities. Also, all the wives of every Ya Na, have chieftaincy title as sub chiefs to some communities so that whenever these communities are having problem at the Ya Na's palace; the wife who is a sub chief will defend this community. Some of such titles include: *Gbanzaling, Koyibiga, Garisinaba, Galibang, Yiwagu etc.*

Female chiefs among Dagombas do not seem to be as recognized as their male counterparts in spite of the various efforts being made by individuals, groups, NGOs, public and the private sectors to facilitate their development. This is because they have a role to play as leaders within their sociocultural environment. Chiefs from the various ethnic groups form their traditional council which is responsible for dealing with matters that affect their chieftaindom presided over by the King of the area (Akron, 2006). The King or paramount chiefs of various ethnic groups of each region form the Regional House of Chiefs. Regional House of Chiefs is responsible for any substance relating to chieftaincy in the region. It regulates appeals from the traditional bodies within the region in respect of nomination, enskinments, installation or deposition of a person as a chief. It has original jurisdiction in all matters relating to paramount stool/skin or the occupant of paramount stool or skin, including a queen mother to a paramount skin. Each Regional Houses of Chiefs elects members of the National House of Chiefs. Five paramount chiefs are elected from each region to represent them at the National House of chiefs. National House of Chiefs is responsible for matters affecting the chieftaincy institution nationwide. Again, in Ghana, the Houses of Chiefs were created to integrate the institution of chieftaincy or traditional authority into democratic governance. Access and acceptance into these Houses however has not been the same for male and female traditional chiefs. Although according to the revised Chieftaincy Act (2008), the Houses abide by laws sourced from customary practices and laws, male control and its resultant gender inequality also exists in such Houses, meaning there is also male domination and female relegation in such institutions. Chieftaincy constitutes the alliance for the exercise of legislative, judicial and executive authorities traditionally. Northern Regional House of Chiefs shows that female chiefs are not allowed into these Houses of Chiefs except Gundogu Na, Kpatuya Na and Kuglogu Na. They are seen as mere observers and can not make contributions like their counterparts' male chiefs even though the constitution allows female chiefs.

Theoretical and Conceptual Bases

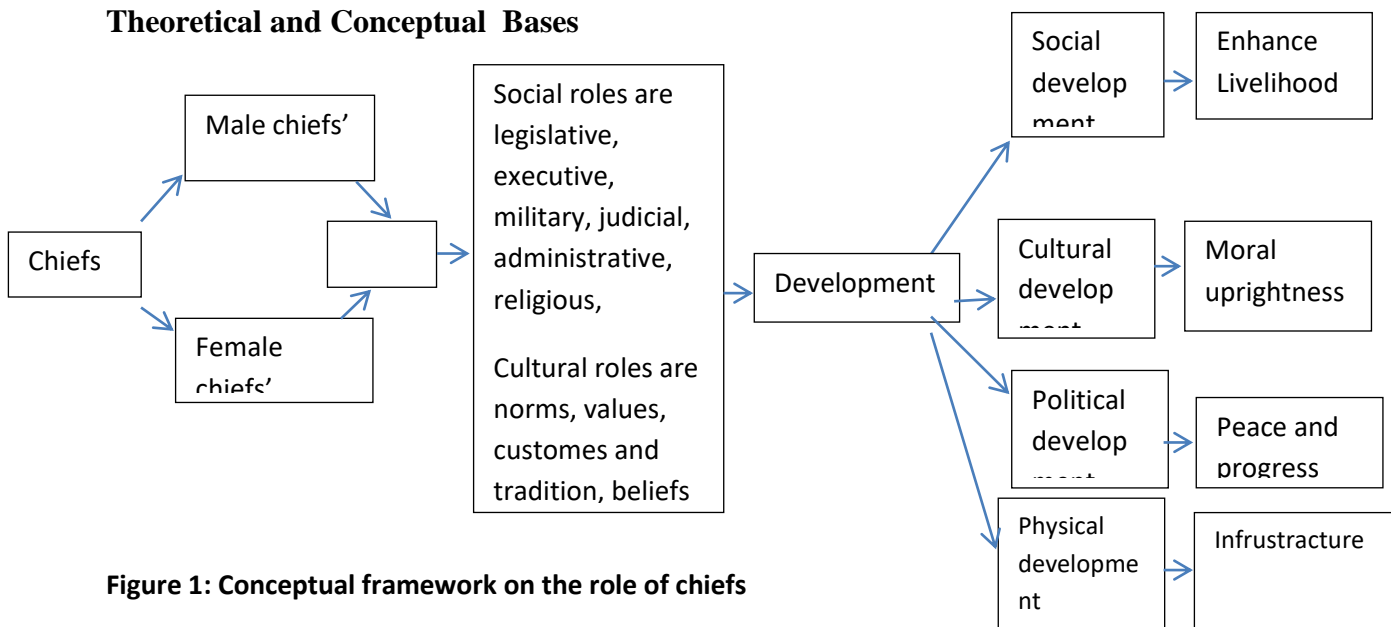


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on the role of chiefs

Authors Own Construct, 2020

From Figure 1 above, item at the start of the arrow leads to the development of the item at the arrow's head. Chieftaincy among Dagombas has been divided into male and female chiefs with their roles. Their roles have been divided into social and cultural ones. The social roles include military, executive, legislative, judicial, administrative, and religious. The cultural roles include the norms, values, traditions and customs that bind the society together for sociocultural development. These also include the day to day activities to be done to ensure peace and progress. These developments or progress could be social, political, cultural and physical which may finally lead to increase in the livelihood, infrastructure, peace and progress and moral uprightness. These roles if carried effectively and efficiently will lead to the entire sociocultural development in the area. Sen (1998) sees social development as the elimination of the main causes of unfreedom, insufficiency and oppression, poor economic prospects and regular social deficiency. Todaro (2003) also sees social development as the procedure of enhancing the quality of all human lives. Cultural developments are beliefs, norms, values and any other capability learned by individual as a fellow of the people (Tylor, 1987). Sociocultural development is where individuals in a society interact with one another and the cultures they live in which shape their mental and social ability to develop (Vygotsky, 1978).

Political development can be put into legislative and executive roles. Legislative role is where the chiefs create rules and bye-laws in consultation with their council of elders and the various representatives in the society or traditional place (Otumfour Osei Tutu, 2004). Executive roles are where the chiefs and their people come out to initiate work for others to follow. The chiefs and their people are accountable to the day to day workings in the society or local places under their area. They have vital declaration on economic events, source and environmental managing, social, disagreement, resolution in the local societies in their kingdom for growth (ibid).

Social Role Theory indicates that, males and females act contrarily in social circumstances and take diverse duties due to the beliefs that people place on them (Eagly, 1987). This theory was developed in the 1980s as a gender related theory. The institution of chieftaincy in Dagbon cannot be totally understood without giving route to the role of the female chief in the area. Human beings do not act or behave randomly. People often behave in certain ways to suit particular situations. Different social situations necessitate particular ways of behaviour. What people expect to be proper behavior however differs from each group of people.

Expectations become apparent with a closer look at the roles people take up in social groups. With each social role one assumes, there must be a change in behaviour to fit the expectations both the person and others have of that particular role. The expected behaviours, which may be termed as norms, are the recognized morals of behavior of most societal groups. Social collections from work groups, friendships, nations and societies. Notwithstanding certain gender norms and stereotypes of society, most people tend to conform to the guiding principles provided by the roles they perform. Eagly (1987), thus believes that social roles control our conducts most than the sex roles we occupy.

Social Role Theory appears to be a good operational theory that can fit into this work, and describe the natural life of female chiefs on the chieftaincy issues in the area and the subsequent

expectations and behaviours of others. This theory will concentrate on interactions between and among groups and individuals as an outcome of the social systems in which people of Dagbon live. In an extensive meta analysis about gender and the efficiency of leaders, Eagly et al (1995), provided evidence that showed that leadership roles are often well-defined in male terms, which brand men as more effective than women. Females are only most efficient when the roles were well-defined in little manly standing, such as the ability to get along with other people. The Theory also proposes that women in leadership roles are judged more harshly even when they are effective leaders and are usually evaluated more negatively than men in the same roles. Therefore, putting them in a difficulty; that is, to be firm and behave as expected of any holder of the position, or to add a feminine touch to the position.

The Role Congruity Theory (RCT) towards females was proposed by Eagly & Karau (2002). The theory says that there is apparent incompatibility between the female gender roles and leadership roles that lead to two forms of biases: seeing females to be less favourites than male as prospective occupants of traditional leadership positions and the females who are traditional leaders when they make laws and their male counterparts also make same laws, society attaches more seriousness to the male laws than the female ones. Assessing behaviour that fulfills the preparations of a leader role less satisfactorily when it is passed by a female (Heilman, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Beall, & Sternberg, 2004).

The Theory proposes that gender categorizes donate to biased assessments in leadership that male take work and females take care (Dodge, Gilroy, & Fenzel, 1995; Heilman, 2001; Hoyt & Burnette, 2013). It further argues that the situation of influence and power in social setup have traditionally been engaged by males, while females have traditionally lower rank status (Horyt & Burnette, 2013). It has become problematic for females to become heads and to attain achievement in leadership positions, particularly in the emerging world where information movement is very low and regulated.

Looking at the nature of Dagbon society, it is clearly seen that the people have more positive perceptions on male chiefs than females. This is because in the Dagbon traditional area, there are over 300 chieftaincy titles but only nine are reserved for women because of the way they are perceived. Some of these titles were rotational between male and female in some areas but now it is in competition between males and females in these same places.

The Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) says that, where people interact with one another and their cultures they are living in shaping their social and intellectual abilities. Vygotsky (1978) understood that relations, peers, parents, society, and relatives have an imperative title role in establishing sophisticated levels of running. According to Cole et al (1974), sociocultural theory is certain that every single meaning in people's cultural progress looks at two levels: on the social level and on the separate level (Cole et al, 1974).

The main aim of this theory was to project a new mode to appear as well as come up with a resolution to societal difficulties of the period. He understood that some issues, apart from the biological make-ups, triggered persons to perform the manner they do (McGlonn-Nelson, 2005).

He is one of the earliest contemporary social scientists to propose a method in which culture performs a part in every individual's environment.

This Sociocultural theory tries explaining how society mental operative is connected to their institution, cultural, and historic background that emphasizes on the sociocultural perception on the duties that involve in social relations and culturally prepared events perform in manipulating social growth (Vygotsky, 1931/1997). This theory defines knowledge as societal development and commencement of people's intellect in culture or society (Vygotsky, 1978). The main subject of this framework is that society interactions perform an important role in the progress of individual's mind towards their culture. Vygotsky (1978) is of the view that every education is done at the dual levels. Through collaboration with others, and combined into the person's mental arrangement. Each role in a child's cultural growth seems to be double: initially on the social level, and on the person's level; among individuals (interpsychological) and then within the child (intrapyschological). It puts on similarly to volunteer attention, to common sense memory, and to the development of ideas. All the higher roles create real relations among persons (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory has a direct relationship to the study of Dagbon female chiefs and their roles in sociocultural development. Since the theory is on the people and their culture, the cultural aspect plays an important role in shaping their mind (Vygotsky, 1978) for development in the area.

The study also employed the theory of functionalism to explain the roles that chiefs and for that matter female chiefs play in the society using the chieftaincy institution as a system with interrelated parts. According to the functionalist perspective, each part of community is co-dependent and gives support to the running of the entire society. Functionalists have seen that every society or entity is held together by understanding and consensus, or cohesions, in which memberships of the people reach an agreement, to work together for the survival of the people. These diverse portions are mainly the social institutions, and each is organized to perform diverse needs and has specific concerns for the shaping and development of the society. All the parts support one another.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach was used to investigate the existence of female chieftaincy among Dagombas. It also adopted the qualitative approach to comprehend specific social event, descriptions, role, group interaction or situation (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman 1989, in Creswell 2009:194). In addition, qualitative design is mainly fact-finding procedure where the researcher regularly makes logic of a social phenomenon by comparing, replicating, contrasting, classifying and cataloguing the object of the research (Haberman and Miles, 1984 in Creswell 2009:164). Subsequently, Silverman (2006) acknowledged a collective set of preferences shared by qualitative scientists as analysis of words and images rather than numbers, meaning rather than behaviour and hypothesis generation rather than hypothesis testing, observation rather than experiment, (Silverman 2006, cited in Agana 2008). Thus, the study of the Dagomba female

chiefs is to understand the social situation, the roles and other interactions of these chiefs in line with the description of Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman 1989 and Miles and Haberman (1984 cited in Creswell 2009). In addition, as described by Silverman, the study aimed at analyzing words rather than numbers as in quantitative, generating hypothesis rather than testing and observation rather than experiment, hence, the choice or adoption of the qualitative design. This study also aims at analyzing words rather than numbers, observation rather than experiment hence the choice of adopting this qualitative design.

For the researcher to ensure a maximization of richness and accuracy of the data for this research, the case study technique was adopted. Case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as an institution, a social group, a program, a person or a process (Merriam 1988 cited in Willis 2007). It also deals with the phenomenon of gender relations amongst the people of Dagombas. The researcher gets an insight or deep understanding about the behaviour of the people and the reason behind such behaviour. This Case Study takes both large and small people to determine the comparative distribution, incidence, and variables that are interrelated. It is a method of vigilant and serious enquiry and analysis looking for the facts of a case, a problem, matter, community and following an event from the starting to the end. The method also aims at learning the facts of a specific case from the entire aspects from all angles (Kumekpor 2002).

The study examined the Dagomba female chiefs as a social group with the aim of understading into details the role of female chieftaincy among Dagombas. Each female chief was approached as a separate case study. This makes the study in its natural situation, and to completely appreciate the setting and to critically investigate and examine the facts of the case as it pertains to the Dagomba female chiefs. This was done with the characteristics of setting definite boundaries for each community; Gundogu, Kpatuya, Kuglogu, Shillun, Yimahagu, Fuyaa, Nakpanzoo, Dedoge and Yiwagu.

The reasons for setting these boundaries were obvious. Even though there is limited literature on female chiefs among Dagombas in the traditional area, there are few works around it and the larger chieftaincy institution in Ghana. Secondly, the boundaries were to enable the researcher to manage the data suitably with much ease.

Population and Sampling process and Data Collection

The views of the Traditional Authorites (Dagomba chiefs, their elders, Tindanas, Magazias), Drum historians, people with specialized knowledge on the matter, the Community elders and subjects were sought in respect of the objectives and questions for the research. The target population comprised the entire Dagomba within the Dagbon traditional area, especially, respondents from Gundogu, Kpatuya, Kuglogu, Shillun, Nakpanzoo, Dedoge, Fuyaa, Yiwagu and Yimahagu, who made up the sampling frame. It was from these communities that the main sampling units were selected for the study. The choice of these people was necessary because, they are those who are either involved or have knowledge of the issue being investigated. Also

per the pilot visit to one of the Drum historians (Choggu Lun Na, Alhassan) in Tamale on April 2019, and August 2019, it was revealed that the Dagombas are one of the groups with a wider network in the country. The researcher's understanding of the Dagbani language helped in the collection and analysis of the data, especially during the period of transcription. Thus, the above people were interviewed separately, to maximize variation. The traditional authorities from these communities therefore constituted my first group of respondents. Since they are the main core of the study, this researcher sees them to have knowledge on the subject.

The second group of respondents were the Drum historians. They are considered to be the group in Dagbon who knows about the culture and tradition of Dagbon, and the day to day nounces of the community gatherings with the chiefs. A third group of the respondents were the people with special knowledge on the subject matter who could answer the questions required based on their special knowledge on the matter and the last group was community elders who could also answer the research questions based on their long stay at the community. The researcher purposively selected the chiefs, elders, some drum historians and community elders. In using the purposive technique as indicated, the elements of the sample were chosen not by a random method, but they were purposively chosen for the research.

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of some chiefs, drum historians and elders, while the snowball sampling was also used because the researcher could not locate all the intended respondents therefore had to rely on the information and direction of other respondents. Chief drummer from Choggu (Lun Na Alhassan) whom the researcher had interviewed earlier helped in the location of other respondents. Thus the purposive and snowball sampling were used in the selection of the chiefs, drum historians, people with special knowledge on the matter and elders, while the accidental (convenient) sampling was used in the selection of the Community elders, since their choice for the interview was based on their availability and readiness to take part in the interview within the community during the data collection process (Royce and Bruce 2010). Homogenous sampling was also used during the focus group discussions period. Researcher grouped the respondents based on the same age, sex, education and occupation. This was done because the researcher wanted the respondents to feel they were apart with the rest to discuss and to get homogenous samples or results.

In all, thirty-seven (37) male and thirteen (13) female constituted this category. Thus, fifty (50) respondents constituted my units of analysis. On the part of the Traditional Authorities, researcher and his team interviewed twenty-four (24) male and 11 female bringing their total to 35. The reason was that there were more male chiefs than females and all the council of elders were males and no female council of Elders. Researcher was able to interview five (5) male drum historians by using snow sampling to identify one respondent to interview and he also led him to get the additional four (4) respondents. The same method was applied to the specialized knowledgeable people in the subject matter but four (4) and one (1) male and female were interviewed respectively. On the part of the community elders, five (5) respondents were interviewed. These respondents were gotten through their availability and readiness to be interviewed and consisted of four (4) male and one (1) female. The reason for their inclusion was that, they form the group of subjects which the chiefs rule.

Data was taken from secondary and primary sources. Primary data bases were; indepth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions alongside interaction and informal conversation with the respondents. Secondary sources of data were reviews and analysis of published and unpublished materials. These sources included books, journals, articles, unpublished works and the internet. The primary data was collected using such instruments as semi-structured interview, observations and focus group discussions (FGD) guides. Details of how they were used are presented below.

Semi Structured interviews were used during the interview stages to enable the researcher to have thorough information on the role of female chiefs of the Dagomba traditional area. The purpose of this was to help identify the position of the ‘pagna nima’ (female chiefs) within the traditional area. This structure was made up of closed and opened ended questions to enable the respondents to express themselves when necessary in order to answer the research questions. It also provided the opportunity to probe interviewees further for clarification and elaborations on the original response to a question. During this session, permission was sought and was given by respondents to audio tape all conversations and answers to questions.

The researcher made sufficient arrangements for effective interviews. Key informants or respondents were written to, informing them of the research and to demand interviews with them. Duplicates of the interview agenda were attached to the introduction letters to enable the prospective interviewees know the matters to be dealt with in the interview. A day to each schedule, telephone calls were made to remind the respondents of our meeting appointment. The interview guide with questions were solely on the objectives of the research for simple classification.

The researcher also employed direct observation especially at the palaces of selected chiefs in order to observe and become familiar with all activities that occurred there, especially how the chiefs judge their cases, how they interact with people who brought their cases to them. The researcher also observed some of the symbols of authorities as found within the palaces. Permission was also sought to observe the royal regalia and some of the social gatherings within the communities in which the chiefs got involved (out-dooring, wedding and funerals). The 2019 staging of the annual Damba Festival as organised by the chiefs in Tamale was also observed specifically at the Gukpenaa and Dakpema palaces. This also enabled the researcher to have first-hand experience on the cultural display among these chiefs and the people of Dagbon.

On the part of focus group discussions, the size of each group was six (three male and three female). The groups were from Gundogu, Kpatuya, Kuglogu, Nakpanzoo, Dedoge and Fuyaa separately but for Shilling, Yimahagu and Yiwagu the focus group discussion was organized in Yendi since they are part of Yendi communities. Issues discussed were on the roles of female chiefs in their sociocultural development. Other issues discussed were the criteria for enskinning female chiefs, the social and cultural roles that these female chiefs play in Dagbon, how their roles relate to the sociocultural development of Dagbon, whether the female chiefs have access to any resources for their sociocultural development, people’s perceptions about the rule of

female and male chiefs, the difference between male and female chiefs in terms of their roles, and the challenges faced by female chiefs in carrying out their roles.

As indicated earlier, assemblymen were used as key informants from these communities where they were identified and used in the selection of respondents for the study. These people were ready to be part of the discussion, and helped in selecting other members, to form each discussion group. The researcher, after gathering group members and explaining to them the reason for the research, facilitated the discussions.

Time for the discussion was given; interviewees were made aware that, the discussions were recorded. The discussions were done in the Dagbani language to allow all respondents to freely contribute to the discussions since all of them could understand and speak the language.

The data was collected in three stages; before, during and after the interviews, observation and focus group discussions. First stage of the data collection was carried out from secondary material sources as indicated. The second stage of data collection consisted of interviews, focus group discussions and observations. Since the study was aimed at developing themes, through the opinions and experiences of the respondents, it was important to conduct the research in a manner that ensure validity of the data. Respondents, who agreed to participate, were given the chance to preview the interview guide or through a telephone call or personal visit, were informed of the areas of questions. This was to enable them have time to look at the questions, with the clarification that this schedule was just a directive for the meeting and that other questions could arise. This produced meaningful responses from the respondents, which resulted in rich data.

The interviews, observations and the focus group discussions schedule for respondents on average lasted an hour. Permission was also sought from each respondent to have the interview recorded. Most of the meetings took place at the respondents' homes or work places and at the period that was more convenient to the respondents. The interview, though was on the guiding questions, was done in a more conversational way to make or put respondents at ease.

Since the study made use of the qualitative research method, the researcher used the Thematic Content Analysis Framework to analyze the data collected. The data collected was categorized into themes which had sub sections that identified and discussed various issues pertaining to the themes. These themes are important to the description of the phenomenon of female chiefs in Dagbon traditional area, and helped to answer the research questions of this study.

The researcher was able to interview the total respondents of 12 (24%) from Gundogu, 7 (14%) from Kpatuya, 6 (12%) from Kuglogu, Fuyaa, Dedoge and Nakpanzoo respectively. The remaining communities were 2 (4%) and 4 (8%) from Shilling, Yiwagu and Yiwagu too. Table 1 below is the breakdown. Fifty (50) respondents constituted the sample size for the data collected, the break down included thirty-five (35) of Traditional authorities (Chiefs, Elders, Tindanas and Magazia), five (5) Drum historians, five (5) specialized knowledgeable people on the matter and five (5) community elders, were picked from the study communities and in

Dagbon in general. Respondents from the study communities who were interviewed included: thirty-seven (37) men and thirteen (13) female. The breakdown of the various communities' respondents can be seen in the table 5.1 above.

On the part of the Traditional Authorities, researcher and his team interviewed twenty-four (24) male and 11 female making a total of 35. The reason was that there were more male chiefs than females and no female council of Elder. Researcher was able to interview five (5) male drum historians and used snow ball sampling by identifying one to interview and he also led me to get the additional four (4) respondents. The same method was applied to the specialized knowledgeable people in the matter but four (4) and one (1) male and female were interviewed respectively. On the part of the community elders, five (5) respondents were interviewed. These respondents were gotten through their availability and readiness to be interviewed and made up of four (4) male and one (1) female. Table 1 below is the summary and breakdown of the overall distribution of the total respondents by their categories.

Table 1. Distribution of total respondent by their categories

Respondents	Male	Female	Total
Traditional Authorities	24	11	35
Drum Historians	5	5	10
People with Specialized Knowledge	4	1	5
Community Wlders	4	1	5
Overall Total	37	18	55

Source: fieldwork, 2020

On the part of ages of respondents, most of them ranged from between 56 and 66+ and the reason was that they were many, the chiefs, elders, tindanas and magazias. Those with age 16 to 35 were not many during the data collection period. Below is a summary of the distribution of respondents categorized in terms of their age. In terms of occupation, majority of the respondents were in the informal sector. These include; farming, butchering, selling of foodstuffs, petty trading, masons, carpenters, other were not doing any occupation etc. Only 10 of the respondents were into the formal sector as teachers, legal people, and accountant. Those who are found in the formal sector have tertiary level educational qualification.

DISCUSSIONS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Knowledge of female traditional leaders in Dagbon

Respondents were asked whether they were aware or know traditional female leaders. All respondents accepted that they were female traditional leaders. Some of them went ahead to mention: Female Chief, Female Tindana, Queen mother and Magazia.

Respondents were asked whether in Dagbon traditional areas, customs and traditions permit women to be chiefs. Most respondents from traditional authority's category accepted that customs and tradition allow females to be chiefs, with the exception of few who said no and their reasons were that they have never seen or heard about them. The other reason was that these respondents were too young and have not lived to see or hear about female chiefs. On the part of Drum historians, Specialised knowledge people on the matter as well as community elders of that category affirmed that tradition and customs allow female to be traditional chiefs. Some of them even went ahead to mention some communities with female chiefs.

It is clear that some women occupy skins in the traditional governance system, an important leadership position in the Northern sector of Ghana. This revelation therefore confirms the view of Odotei and Awedoba (2006) that female chiefs occupy some skins in the southern and Northern regions. This goes to confirm the view of Boateng I (1991) that in Dagbon, there is a detailed system of female chief ship, thus putting to rest the notion that women do not play any leadership roles in traditional governance in the North. The study went further to establish whether there have ever been women chiefs in the traditional area of the respondents. This question was asked because even though customs and tradition may permit a female to be chief, it could be possible that no woman has ever been made a chief.

On whether there has ever been a woman chief in the traditional area of respondents, all respondents from these communities from Gundogu, Kpatuya, Kuglogu, and Shilling said yes because it is only women who are always enskinned as chief in those areas. But with the communities which were rotating between men and women and now in competition between male and female (Nakpanzoo, Dedoge, Yimahgu, Fuyaa and Yiwagu), respondents' categories like traditional authorities, drum historians and the community elders said yes, because they have seen and heard about them. Others said they have ever been female chiefs in some communities in Dagbon. But some of the specialized people on the matter said no to that question, because some of them were not born. The study solicited views of the respondents on what qualities a woman should possess to qualify her to be enskinned as a chief in Dagbon traditional area.

Some of the respondents from traditional authorities, drum historians and specialized knowledgeable people and community elders said a woman should come from the royal family/lineage (being a direct daughter or granddaughter of the past or present Ya Na), be respectful, brave, impartial in dealing with all matters concerning people to qualify her as a female chief. Wealth and physical appearance were also mentioned as some of the qualifications. From the same category, some also indicated that the woman may be a wife of a chief. This last quality goes in line with what Awedoba and Odotei (2014) again indicated that, the wives of Ya Na are enskinned as sub chiefs to some communities in Dagbon. The sub chieftaincy titles include; *Gbanzalun, Koyibiga, Kalibang, Garisinaba, Yiwagu* etc.

From the point of view of most respondents, the researcher contacted, agreed that the woman should come from the royal lineage, respectful, brave, impartial in dealing with people's matters, physical beauty and wealthy to support her people financially when necessary. Only few of them disagreed with the last two qualities, but declined to speak. Finally, with the qualities of wealth

and beauty, all the categories of respondents believed there were not very critical or important points to qualify a woman to be made a chief.

Respondents indicated that Gundogu, Kpatuya and Kuglogu are assumed in order of importance. When Kuglogu becomes vacant, someone who is a direct daughter of Ya Na occupies the place. If Kpatuya becomes vacant, Kuglogu shifts to the place and if Gundogu becomes vacant Kpatuya shifts to occupy the place. Respondents indicated that if either of the two places (Kpatuya and Kuglogu) is occupied by a female who is the direct son of Ya Na, the person will remain there until she dies because Gundogu cannot be occupied by non direct daughter of Ya Na. Respondents explained that males are now competing with women for Nakpanzoo, Fuyaa, Yimahagu, Yiwagu and Dedoge.

Before and after enskinment of female chiefs among Dagombas

The chieftaincy institution in most communities requires the confinement of the chief in waiting for some period. During which he or she is schooled on the detailed history of the people, rites and rituals and their performances, the dos and don'ts and everything needed to be a successful chief. For female chiefs, their cases were not entirely different.

Community elder in Kpatuya indicated that a before female chief among Dagombas is to be enskinned as chief of Kpatuya community, she will have to be confined for some time, where everything about the chieftaincy position has to be learnt. According to him they are taught on how to dress, that is, to put on clothes, smock, hat etc like their male counterparts, how to talk and address people as a chief in public, the special greetings as chief, sacred days and the rites performed on such days and so on. Also their names change to the name of the title such as Silling Na, Kuglogu Na, Kpatuya Na etc.

However, the information gathered from the elders and the female chiefs is that one can deduce that there was a slight bias as to what they taught in confinement. They need to be taught into detail performances of certain rites and rituals to become ritually fit and could partake in their performances as chiefs. This also goes to support Eagly and Karau (2006) Role Congruity Theory of prejudice towards females which says there is perceived incongruity or bias between female gender role and leadership roles which bring about two forms of biases towards female. First society is seeing female to be less favourite whenever there is vacancy for people to aspire to become traditional leaders, that is why in Dagbon traditional area there are over 300 chieftaincy titles and female can become chiefs only on 11 or less skins. The second part is when the female chiefs make laws and their male counterparts chiefs also make the same laws, people or society attach more importance to the male laws than that of the female laws. Respondents were to tell who enskin the female chiefs among Dagombas?

Mba Dugu (2020) from Yendi indicated that it is he Mba Dugu who enskins all the chiefs in Dagbon apart from Ya Na and Gundogu Na under the instructions of Ya Na and the other kingmakers. The enskinment process of Gundogu is done by Kuga Na and the other kingmakers. Kpatuya Wulana (2020) stated that Kuga Na enskins Gundogu Na and Ya Na and they both enter

‘Katini’ (the Royal Mausoleum). Kuga Na picks the chiefly gown and the hat (in white) give them their Imams to pray over them for devine blessings. He rubs them the incoming chief two times and on the third count, he uses them to wear the chief while she is on the bear floor. The rest of the chiefs’ enskinment are the same but they do not enter ‘Katini’ and their enskinments are done by Mba Dugu under the instructions of Ya Na.

Immediately the person wears the chiefly gowns and the hat, that person automatically becomes the substantive chiefs of the area and women around will start to ululate (kpalinga), while others start firing musketary to indicate that the new chief has been enskinned (community elder from Yiwagu). After his/her enskinment as chief, the chief has to perform some rituals on the way before getting to the community or his house. Those who still want to climb ahead do not allow their arms to appear the chiefly gown, the chief and the senior wife have to wash their feet before entering into their house. Others have to get to some villages to do some sacrifices to their gods to support them to rule well before going home (community elder from Dedoge). Nakpanzoo Magazia also indicated that the moment you become chief, your name changes to the chieftaincy title as chief of the area, your wives name change to ‘Na pagaba’, your children names change to ‘nabihi’ and nabipugunsi, (princes and princesses).

The study showed that these female chief (Gundogu Na) take charge of the ‘Yoodoya’ (traditional spiritual stick) during the annual rituals and sacrifices which Ya Na and Dagombas are performing for peace and development in Dagbon. That on the part of funerals, Gundogu Na directs Kpatuya and Kuglogu Na to attend on their behalf. Gundogu Na takes over the palace when Ya Na dies until new Ya Na is enskinned. She also takes care of the cooking at the palace until a new Ya Na is enskinned. Other respondents said that Kuglogu and Kpatuya Nas search for new wives and shave them for new Ya Na. If any wife is pregnant, she will be identified and proper care can be taken on her until she delivers. Respondents further stated that female chiefs give proper attention to children of Ya Na until they marry.

Most of the respondents from the study communities stated that, Gundogu Na, Kpatuya, Kuglogu and other female chiefs are always consulted or involved in the chieftaincy affairs in Dagbon. In terms of enskinments, funerals and festivals, Ya Na always involves Gundogu Na by way of consulting her who also involve Kpatuya and Kuglogu as indicated above in decision making process to keep sanity in the kingdom. Women chiefs are invited to help judge cases or decide who the next chief will be (Yimahagu Wulana). It means female chiefs have roles to play just like their male counterparts. As indicated above chiefs in Dagbon have been divided into male and female and both have roles to play for the development and survival of the Dagbon chieftaincy. This goes in line with what Functionalists theory (Durkheim, 1898) says that everyone in the society has a role to play for the development and stability of the society.

It was again revealed that chiefs in general in the past and present perform the following roles in their communities. They include: military, religious, judiciary, administrative, legislative, executive and cultural roles. These go to support what Radcliffe-Brown (1961) said, the maintenance and establishment of social order within a territorial framework by the organized exercise by coercive authority, through the use, or the possibility of the used of physical force”.

These brought about the impact of social change. Significant changes took place in the roles of chiefs. In the wake of both colonialism and political independence of Ghana, most of the chief's roles were taken over largely by new and modernized institutions. Indeed, some of the roles such as religious and cultural have tended to persist. This goes in line with Vygotsky (1978) Sociocultural Theory which says that people interact with one another and the culture in which they live and shape their mental and social abilities for development.

Kuglogu Na however was of the view that Dagbon chieftaincy originally belongs to women. According to the female chief, it is women who give birth to children, nurse them and also take good care of them. Other respondents are of the view that female chiefs also carry out the spiritual, dispute resolution, peace and development for the progress of their communities. The enskinment of these current female chiefs have brought a huge change to women and traditional leadership and have also redefined the roles and positions women play or hold in the traditional politics of Dagbon traditional area.

Role of Female Chiefs in Dagbon Traditional Area.

The study found that female chiefs have communities under their jurisdiction and enskin people as substantive chiefs there. These communities include Kutuewlanbonni, Chankum, Nakurba, Jornamni and Nyelungirni. Female chiefs among Dagombas have rituals to perform. It was revealed that out of the 15 respondents (12) twelve of them said they perform some rituals during festival times as indicated. Apart from the festival periods, the chiefs of Gundogu and Kpatuya regularly perform some rituals on behalf of their community people through their elders. Three (3) respondents said they did not know if they perform any rituals in Dagbon.

The Political Role of the Female Chiefs

It was revealed that there were political roles the female chiefs perform among Dagombas apart from supporting the Ya Na in the installation of other sub chiefs and elders. They also see to it that there is peace and harmony in their areas of jurisdiction. First, they settle cases among their citizens, especially theft, marriage and divorce cases. The Kpatuya chief explained that her land of supervision is so large that at times she solves problems of conflict between families and even communities. This confirms with Otumfuo's submission that the traditional leader's role encompassed numerous functions which revolves around the cardinal theme of guiding, protecting, defending and providing for the needs of the society he / she served.

Researcher also found out from the respondents that their political role has helped to curb trouble in their areas. Cases that should have been reported to the police are solved internally by these chiefs. Where the litigants are dissatisfied with the outcome of the case, the chief herself then refers it to the Ya Na. The political role of the female chiefs in Mamprugu is important for the peace of the land. Everybody fears them. It is very difficult to hear about crime in their villages.

Economic Role of the Female Chiefs

It was revealed that the community members make farms for the chiefs who have communities such as Gundogu, Kpatuya and Kuglogu. They do not work on the farm themselves but the community members do. It is the duty of community members who own farms to also provide the chiefs with foodstuffs at the end of each harvest season as stated already. Apart from Shilling and Yimahagu chiefs who have no communities, Gundogu, Kpatuya and Kuglogu depend largely on their communities for their daily upkeep. Secondly, they can also make money from court fines on cases that are brought to them as indicated above. At any sitting for a judgment of a case, court fees are supposed to be paid before the sitting. The one who is found guilty is again charged an amount of money to pay. This is what they live on daily in their courts.

Social Role of Female Chiefs in their Traditional Areas

The study found that female chiefs can marry before, during and after ascension to the throne. Respondents from Yendi said that, the culture of Dagbon did not say no to females who are on the throne getting married and a community elder from Shilling, added that, one Yelzoli Lana Lagfu the then chief of Yelzoli's (Zabzugu), wife became Gundogu Na. According to the research she doubled as marital woman and paramount chiefs of Gundogu. This means that assuming she had not reached the menopause; she could have given birth while on the throne. They do household chores themselves as part of their sociocultural activities. In discussing the performance of feminine household chores, Kuglogu Na confidently said that

'there is no feminine chore she does not know how to do, and she is very good at them too, she can cook, clean, sweep, wash clothes and dishes, take care of children, manage the home, and other activities in the house'

Kuglogu Na even mentioned that during the time she was living with the late husband as husband and wife, she did everything for the man when it came to wifely duties. She stated that: *"It is this position that disturbs me a little. Although I can get up and do the chores on my own, people feel uncomfortable seeing me doing them. So when I try to even sweep, they quickly rush to prevent me from doing so". She again added that: "Despite the position given me, I am a woman, and I have to train my children or followers, especially the girls with me well. No tradition prevents me from going to the kitchen or doing other chores"*.

She further explained that whether she was a chief or not, female chief is first and foremost a woman and a mother as well; it is her duty to bring up her children to become good adults. This fear of failing as a mother can be linked to the fact that in our part of the world, when daughters get married and they cannot perform their duties as wives, it is the mother's name the family-in-laws will mention as having not done their job well and the blame is always on the mother no matter who she is or what position she holds in society.

Performance of the traditional sacrifices and rituals by Female Chiefs

The female chiefs as part of their role perform rituals like sacrifices, pouring of libation, and slaughtering of animals to their smaller gods. The men who are their elders always do that on behalf of the female chiefs. Others were of the notion that in Dagbon, a female is not supposed to hold a fowl publicly since people will attribute her to be witch who wants to cause problems in their communities. Other respondents stated that women do not have the courage, zeal and capacity to do the sacrifice themselves.

Almost all respondents from drum historians, key informants and the community elders agreed with the presence of female chiefs in the Dagbon Traditional Area but only few disagreed and the reason was that they have never heard or seen any female Tindana in their communities. Those who said yes in Tamale mentioned Katariga Tindana Paga. This female chief perform the same function as compared with her counterparts elsewhere in the northern region of Ghana. The next stage was to establish the roles female Tindanas play from those who indicated there are female Tindanas with roles they play in the Dagbon traditional areas.

The data revealed that, respondents like, the drum historians and traditional authorities such as the Tindanas who said there are female Tindanas in Dagbon traditional area, said the female Tindana perform roles like mediating between their people and the gods and performing rituals on behalf of the people. Female Tindana arbitrates and settles disputes between her people, they do some sacrifices for the chiefs and their people and they are the original owners and administrators of the traditional area.

Drum historian from Yiwagu community indicated that, with these 11 skin titles which daughters and granddaughters of Ya Na can be enskinned as chiefs, some of them are solely for daughters of Ya Na; such as Gundogu, Kpatuya, Kuglogu but Shilling is solely for granddaughters of Ya Na. Those which were rotational and now in competition between daughter, granddaughters and grandsons include; Nakpanzoo, Sasegele, Warigbini, Yimahagu, Yiwagu, Fuyaa and Dedoge (Mahama, 2004). Respondents indicated that the reason for that is that these males and females come from the same lineage and from the royal families or descendants of Ya Nas and have the right to compete for those skin titles. Other respondents say that it came to a time when there were no granddaughter or daughter to occupy the vacant positions which made the grandsons to come in.

Challenges of Female Chiefs in the Dagbon Traditional Area.

The study found that most people in the country and Dagbon in particular are not aware of the existence of female chiefs and the roles they play in Dagbon traditional area. This goes to support Eagly's (1987) Social Role Theory which says that men and women behave differently in social situation and take different roles as expected of them by the society.

Kpatuya Na was of the view that, since the female chiefs doubled as chiefs of their communities and family members of their entire families, attending chiefly meetings and at the same time

family meetings lead them role strain. Role strain occurs when a person has difficulty meeting two or more responsibilities at the same time. Thus, these chiefs experience a lot of role strain in the conduct of their duties. The female chief always experiences external pressure from the neighbouring ethnic groups, they always see Fulani people coming to them with their problems to be solved and whenever these groups are even not right, they do not want to understand because they always want to be right. The Abudu and Andani devide is also a problem as losers of cases often claim their lost was influenced by the devide they come from, rather than the merits of the case.

Another challenge has to do with capacity enhancement on how to better rule their people and resolve conflicts within the traditional area, specifically those that have to do with women. The chief also said that, lack of finance to help advance their sociocultural roles is also a factor. The chief also talked of not having permanent chief palaces and currently at the husband's house. This is affecting her whenever she is to exercise her chiefly duties. From the interview, Yiwagu respondent stated that, education is one of their problems because they do not have the infrastructure in the area for their children to attend school and the chief and his people find it difficult in financing the infrastructure since they do not have any economic activities to support them. That their prayer is that they want the government or NGOs to support the community with school infrastructure (classroom and offices) and government to support them with teachers in that regard. The chiefs, elders and people are of the view that, their other biggest problems include; transportation, potable water, clinics and electricity.

The female chiefs' position is challenging because of the notion of male superiority, and such a thing is definitely bound to cause certain frictions between her and male chiefs. Whilst the female chiefs expect her fellow women to embrace the idea of female chieftaincy and support them, they rather treat them like outcasts. Also the men who feel intimidated because of their positions, or have inhibitions to the idea of a woman being a paramount chief also treat her with disrespect.

Sociocultural Challenges

Female chiefs face sociocultural challenges among Dagombas. Out of the number of 15 respondents who were asked whether they know or were aware of any sociocultural challenges women chiefs face, three (4) respondents agreed that women chiefs faced sociocultural challenges, whereas two (3) said they did not know anything about that and 8 said there was nothing like cultural challenges facing the female chiefs. These 8 respondents were all males.

About 20 % of the group interviewed said the female chiefs were facing some sociocultural challenges whereas two of them indicated they did not know about that representing 13.3% of the total number of 15 respondents. Eight (8) of the respondents, representing 53.3%, said female chiefs were not in any way facing sociocultural challenges. This is not surprising because Dagombas have patrilineal society and males by virtue of their cultural inclination may not necessarily see what the female chiefs are going through in terms of their sociocultural challenges.

However, the female chiefs indicated that they face a lot of sociocultural challenges. The Shillun Na and the granddaughters indicated that, due to cultural challenges they cannot aspire to be Gundogu Na in their lives because the tradition, culture, values, norms do not allow them to be there. Further, some of them like Shillun Na are not made to be part of the Dagbon Traditional Council apart from Gundogu Na, Kpatuya Na and Kuglogu. The reason is that, Dagbon is a patrilineal society, women do not attend such meetings with men because they sit for longer hours. Historically, women were not included in meetings because meetings were usually held for long periods and members did not want distraction from females. Females were likely to waste time going to look for places to urinate.

One of the elders from Fuyaa said one of the greatest sociocultural challenge is that it is only older women who are chosen for these titles. At their ages, it is difficult for them to think about development. Again they are always weak and cannot contribute effectively to the solution of our socio-economic problems. The Shillun Na on 8th December 2020 said she faces so many sociocultural challenges. One of them being that she cannot perform some rituals in public except through her sub chiefs or tindana. Second she is not a member of the Dagbon Traditional Council and cannot also travel the way she wishes to.

Traditional leaders have an increasingly important role to play in the sociocultural development of their communities. However, they cannot succeed in this challenge. There is the need to work with other partners in their local areas, for example, local and district councils, state entities and other agencies like NGOs and community based organizations. From the interviews conducted, it was realized from all the male respondents that as women chiefs and the fact that they are also illiterates and already advanced in age, it was particularly difficult for them to work with all the agencies mentioned above.

Additionally, as creatures of statutes, they need to understand the policy and legislative environment so as to be able to tackle the needs of their people. They must also be in a position to serve as essential links between themselves and their subjects or local people in their areas and government. However, the female chiefs from the research revealed that the lack of the required knowledge to appropriately deal with these challenges make them less effective in mobilizing all their people together with other structures of government such as the Local Councils and the District Assemblies.

The female chiefs also face personal and cultural challenges since they do not live with their familie at times. Kpatuya Na in an interview on March 19, 2020 said that female chiefs cease to belong to their husbands once they are made chiefs which is a general challenge. Second, the enskinment of the female chief is always done during the day and for longer periods. In addition, they are made to involve themseves in various rituals activities throughout the day. Given the age of these female it is realized that the activities they are involved in usually have a negative effect on their health. The female chiefs themselves had answered in the affirmative that they were facing general problems.

Another challenge female chiefs encounter is that they do not have means of transportation. Most of the communities are far away from each other and so travelling to and from these communities is quite tedious. One of the elders revealed the chief sometimes ask for support for transportation from the members of the community and/or the district assembly. This contrasts sharply with male chiefs who are stronger and are engaged in commercial activities, farming and other businesses. Perhaps because the male chiefs were also usually directly with their families they had more support generally than the female ones. The palaces in which the female chiefs lived do not befit their statuses and they do not usually have money and mostly have to rely on the Ya Na for support.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has recognized the existence of Dagomba female chiefs in Dagbon Traditional Area since time immemorial. It has also shown the existence of female chiefs among Dagombas today including the communities they reign as chiefs.

At the time of collecting data for this study, the female chiefs were three (Gundogu, Kpatuya and Kuglogu). Shilling is supposed to be part of them but she was late. The remaining communities (Yiwagu, Nakpanzoo, Dedoge, Fuyaa and Yimahagu) are in competition between granddaughters and grandson.

There are nine communities that females can be enskinned as chiefs among Dagombas. The research also described the criteria for the selection of female chiefs among Dagombas and concluded that in selecting these chiefs, there is reliance on the supernatural supremacy. No human being can determine who the real choice of the ancestor is. This is seen clearly in the consultation of divination by the King and people of Dagbong in order to get the right candidate for the chieftaincy title. However Gundogu Na, Kpatutya and Kuglogu ascend through line shifting. Changes in the female chieftaincy institution among Dagombas have to do with the position of male dominance. The cases of Fuyaa, Dedoge, Nakpanzoo, Yiwagu and Yimahagu are examples where males can now compete with females for the skin because they feel they can rule better and they also feel they are from the royal family of Ya Na who are qualified to be enskinned to those communities. The changes in the female chieftaincy institution has also been due to the fragile nature of the royal females because they are usually very old making the males lobby to have their way. The research corroborates the findings of Amina (2010) which indicated that some female chiefs existed in Northern Ghana, notably Mamprugu and Bimbilla.

The roles and challenges in the female chieftaincy institutions are specific. First the major role they perform in Dagbon is on the demise of Ya Na where Gundogu Na in consultation with the other female chiefs take charge of the palace to run until a new Ya Na is enskinned. They are not king makers but Ya Na consult them when it comes to the selection and the installation of other chiefs. They, however, perform the political roles by enskining sub chiefs within their area of jurisdiction and also enskin their elders. Their cultural or ritual roles also come to play during festivals and when the shrines and gods they worship want to be appeased.

They, however, have challenges generally because they are in a male dominated society. They again are very old and cannot really decide on any concrete developmental programmes in their communities. They also have challenges because some of them are culturally constrained to move. Traditional beliefs are too much part of the fabric of the Dagomba society. They have all been recognized as traditional rulers even though they are women. The society has approved of them so they are respected and feared. The following points were recommended:

- Proper on sensitive issues such as culture and tradition. It must therefore be evidently clear that if government expects Traditional rulership especially the female chiefs to discharge certain delegated duties and functions, it is imperative that appropriate capacity building programmes and support be put in place by the government and implemented.
- As other state structures at the community level, the female chiefs should co-operate and work together with Local and District Assemblies in their quest for delivery of services to their subjects.
- The Traditional Council to make all the female chiefs members of the Traditional Council so that all of them can attend meetings and to also recommend to the Regional House of Chiefs to also do the same for all the female chiefs as members of the Regional House of Chiefs.
- The royal families of Ya Na to consider installing more vibrant and active female as chiefs and that educated females will help uphold the principles of traditional authority among Dagombas and move it forward for development.
- Places like Yiwagu, Yimahagu, Dodoge, Fuyaa and Nakpanzoo which were reserved for females but now in competition with males, who are dominating, should be given back to the females.
- The District Assemblies to consider helping the female chiefs with at least a quarterly allowance that can keep them happy and active.

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