# DYNAMICS OF THE CHIEFTAINCY SUCCESSION CONFLICT IN THE AKUAPEM TRADITIONAL AREA OF GHANA

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study is a contribution to knowledge on the existence of succession conflict within the Akuapem Traditional Area. The study focused on the dynamics of the conflict. This study was anchored on an interpretivist philosophical viewpoint. Methodologically, the study employed a qualitative approach with case study research design. Thirty-four adults who have lived in the area for the past five years participated in the study. They included members of the traditional council, the Akuapem North Municipal Assembly, the royal gates to the paramountcy and adults within the community. Participants were selected using extreme case, critical case and convenience sampling techniques. Data were collected with the use of interview guide, focus-group discussion and observation protocols. The data collected were analysed thematically in line with the research question and emerged patterns from the dataset. The study found out that the dynamics of the conflict revolved around causes which involves power struggle, contestation of succession processes, and the disrespect of traditional authorities and stakeholders. The multiple causes resulted in the exacerbation of the conflict. The complex dynamics of the conflict has had multiple implications on the stability and development of the society. It is therefore, recommended that various measures be put in place by the government and various institutions concerned as well as the traditional area to address the chieftaincy succession issue and adequately ensure the full functioning of the institution and the society.*

**KEYWORDS:** Akwapem traditional area, chieftaincy, conflict, Ghana, succession

## INTRODUCTION

The development of a society depends on several factors including her revered institutions. Arguably, Ghana's level of development has been achieved through the contributions of several important institutions or structures including chieftaincy. The importance of chieftaincy institution in the pre-colonial, colonial, independence and post-independence era of Ghana cannot be over emphasized. It was an epitome of organized governance in the precolonial era and thus, has proven effective in the political alterations of Ghana. As a continuing traditional structure and practice, it is seen by many as a system that helps harmonize the country's development and governance efforts. In the view of Awedoba (2009), most chiefs in various communities have become agents of development and thus, they are essential to contemporary local governance. It is perhaps in this vein, that the institution has been significantly recognized legally in Ghana, making it a formidable foundation for her proper functioning in the society.

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The 1992 constitution of Ghana acknowledges the chieftaincy institution in Articles 270 to 277. It states in article 270 (1) of Ghana's constitution that "the institution of chieftaincy, together with its traditional councils as established by customary law and usage, is hereby guaranteed" (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992).

The real importance of chieftaincy is valuable for the functioning of the society. In spite of this claim, it has been bred with issues that have strong implications for the stability and development of the country. A myriad of these issues has been widely reported. Chiefly, succession conflicts, corruption, land dispute, political interference, authority over resources, are some of the issues that the chieftaincy institution in Ghana is saddled with. Succession conflict seems to be a major chieftaincy concern that affects the stability of the institution and the society as a whole. It is a common experience in many parts of Ghana. According to Ahorsu (2014), African states institutions' vulnerability to factionalism, negatively affects their stability and order. The complex interplay between structural factors and specific agents of the society results in the perpetuation of conflicts that in most cases affects the stability.

The development implications of chieftaincy succession conflicts in Ghana are a major cause for worry and concern among Ghanaians. Awedoba (2009) provided instances of chieftaincy conflict in Ghana; chiefly, Ga-Mantse succession conflicts, the Anlo chieftaincy conflict, the Adoagyiri crises, the Tuabodom chieftaincy succession conflict, the Akyem-Swedru chieftaincy conflicts are some issues the country has been saddled with. The numerous but unending conflicts within the institution contributes to the call by many to abolish it. Ahiave (2013) argued that the chieftaincy institution in Ghana has been bedeviled with numerous conflicts; hampering progress and for that matter, the institution is of no relevance in contemporary local governance. However, conflict is a social continuity and discontinuity that is located in the structures of human self and society (Ahiave, 2013). Kokken and Sundell (2017) corroborated that, instances of succession have had momentous effects for conflict in a large portion of societies' history. This assertion lends credence to issues of succession particularly, in chieftaincy.

Consequently, with conflict being a major issue in the institution, Eshun and Dankwa (2019) are of the view that, issues of recognition or derecognition, problems of eligibility of succession, influence of queen mothers and political interference contribute to the chieftaincy succession conflicts in most traditional areas. These are not recent development and neither are they restricted to only one traditional area. By and large, almost all traditional areas have encountered one of these forms of issues or a majority of them during succession of chiefs. Whereas some have been successfully looked at and resolved, others tend to be protracted. Therefore, in lieu of the significance of the institution, experiences and recent studies characterize chieftaincy succession in Ghana with numerous issues particularly, conflicts which serve as potential source of instability. Chieftaincy succession issues thus, can be operationalized as problems or matters affecting the enstoolment or enskinment of a chief. In lieu to this, chieftaincy succession conflict is the disagreement between factions or groups within society(s) due to an enstoolment or enskinment of a chief.

The Akuapem Traditional Area, being one of the noticeable and revered paramountcies in Ghana has over the years been engaged in a contested succession process after the demise of

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Oseadeeyo Nana Addo Dankwa III. It is a normal practice and accepted within the confines of tradition that the paramountcy of Akuapem Traditional Area rotates among three acceptable royal gates in Akropong-Akuapem. The Sakyiabea royal gate currently had the mandate to present a formidable person to succeed the stool/throne. Not until 12th April, 2020 when a new chief was installed from the Sakyiabea royal gate, the Akuapem traditional throne for the paramountcy has been vacant since 2015. Events surrounding the installation and enstoolment as well as the legitimacy of the "enstooled paramount chief" is in contention. As such, experiences, empirical studies and reports in media suggest a succession conflict that results in social instability, creating a national concern. Chieftaincy succession conflicts are not of novelty, however, the one surrounding the chieftaincy succession in Akuapem have generated grave concerns within and outside the traditional area. Research has not documented rigorously, the issues involved in the chieftaincy succession conflict of Akuapem, and the challenges to the succession. It became expedient to explore the dynamics of the chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area and how that has affected the functioning of the chieftaincy institution and the society. The study is essential as it will provide relevant data that could be useful to address future occurrences around chieftaincy succession and strengthening the functioning of the institution.

The problem of the study arises from the fact that, the basic assumption of functionalism is that societal structures work together effectively and efficiently to ensure stability and development. Traditional structures, specifically the chieftaincy institution is said to work in order to harmonize the development and governance efforts in the country. To this end, the importance of the chieftaincy institution has not waned in most parts of Ghana despite the entrenchment of democratic rule and the expansion of state powers since the return to civilian rule in 1992. The institution serves as a formidable structure that contributes to the development and functioning of the society. Rightly put by Prah and Yeboah (2011), the institution has been an important structure in the heat of all political alterations and aspects of the Ghanaian society. Many people still hold their traditional leaders in high esteem and support for the institution of chieftaincy remains high in most parts of the country. This is particularly the case amongst highly established traditional societies such as the Ashanti, Mamprusi, Dagomba, Wala of Northern Ghana and the Akuapem.

The contest of chieftaincy position in many traditional areas is very competitive (Awedoba & Odotei, 2006) and thus, may possibly be attributed to instability of society. Meanwhile, societies have over the years developed procedures based on their customs and traditions through which a person is selected as a chief. At the same time, the Chieftaincy Act, 2008 (Act 759) has outlined procedures and guidelines for kingmakers on the installation, enskinment, destoolment and deskinment of chiefs. Despite the existing customary procedures and the legal provisions for the installation of a chief, the Akuapem chieftaincy experienced succession challenges which prolonged the installation of a paramount chief for about five years. The prolonged succession process suggests challenges of chieftaincy in the Akuapem Traditional Area as a result of succession conflict. Inhabitants of Akuapem Traditional Area are worried and concerned about the potential security, stability and development implications. Yet, there are no rigorous research on the Akuapem chieftaincy succession conflict. Therefore, the

purpose of this empirical study was to explore the chieftaincy succession conflict in the Akuapem Traditional Area in terms of its dynamics to the development in the area.

This research question guided the study-What are the dynamics of the chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area? The study is bounded by chieftaincy succession conflict. The study is further confined to the Akuapem Traditional Area in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study therefore covers only the people of the Akuapem Traditional Area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In studying chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area, the focus was to explore and understand the conflict hurled within the institution, which is presumed to be a structure that contributes to the functioning of the society, and the implications of conflict(s) on the society. In lieu of this, Merton's approach of Structural Functionalism Theory is employed to underpin the study. Structural functionalism, which dates back to the 19th century highlights the interrelatedness of different structures, working together to promote homeostasis, thereby resulting in stability of the society. The theory, used in different fields and sectors has been popularized by functionalists. Noteworthy, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, and Radcliffe-Brown are important proponents of the theory in the functionalist perspective. The theory is used to understand the interrelatedness of social structures (organs) and how they function together to promote equilibrium in the society. Functionalism can be located within Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, Psychology and other Social Sciences discourse.

The basic assumption of the theory suggests the society to be a complex social system whose parts work together to promote stability. The theory establishes that the functioning of the society appears to be dependent on the society's structures (organs), working together for cohesion (Elwell, 2013). The prevalent elements, institutions or structures have sociological functions hence, they are necessary for the maintenance of the society. Functionalists argue that social practices and institutions are said to have a functional role in sustaining the system as a whole (Britannica, 2020). Their source of argument may be based upon comparative analysis of different institutions and structures of the society working for the betterment of its people. Therefore, the theory focuses on relationships between various social institutions that make up the society or the system in its entirety. The society is viewed from a macro-level and thus, commits the organs of the system (the society) to fulfil social needs to ensure equilibrium. The society's groups (institutions/structures) are built on consensus and are mutually supportive.

Most functional approaches share one common element; an interest in relating one part to the other to promote stability and equilibrium of the society. Functionalists have thus, been criticized on many occasions. Noteworthy, their inability to account for change or contradictions in structures and conflicts, and ignorance of inequality, which usually causes tension and conflict are some of the criticisms levelled against the theory.

Meanwhile, Merton's approach of functionalism refutes the criticism of not giving room for change (Elwell, 2013). Social structures should be analyzed in terms of statics and dynamics (Merton, 1996 in Elwell, 2013). He made change central to research within a functionalists'

paradigm. The concept of change in his approach is capitalized on the issues of tensions, conflicts, contradictions and sometimes strain within or between societal elements or structures. Recognizing the limitation to functional approaches, Merton (1996) in Ewell (2013) asserted that not all structures perform functions that promote stability, there are others that can be dysfunctional or perhaps, have some dysfunctional elements, and there are others that serve multiple functions. In his approach, there are two types of functions; manifest functions which he described as the intended function of a structure; and latent function which are the unintended functions of a structure (Merton, 1996 in Ewell, 2013). Hence, dysfunctionality cannot be overruled in Merton's approach. Dysfunctional structures generate pressure for change within the society.

Consequently, dysfunctional elements in the structures also develop key issues for change which advertently, affects the stability of the society. This suggests structural inefficiencies that disrupt the society's stability. It can be contended that the stability of a society can be interrupted by conflicts that may erupt within structures. The chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area is studied using this theory as a lens. Merton (1996) in Elwell (2013), therefore argued that in recognizing and examining the dysfunctional aspect of the structure and the society, we can explain the development and persistence of alternatives. This calls for the essence of the Merton's approach of structural functionalism in this study.

With the application of the theory, functionalism focuses on the ideology that society is a total system whose parts (usually, structures or institutions) interrelate for the functioning and maintenance of the social system. Consequently, functionalism focuses on analyzing the interrelations of elements within a structure, contribution of the structure to maintaining the social system as well as consequences of social phenomenon in the structure on the other structures and the social system. Merton's approach as cited in Elwell (2013) argued that, sociological elements and structures have functions hence, are necessary for the development and maintenance of the social system. The functioning of the Ghanaian society particularly, the Akuapem Traditional Area is engendered by the interrelations of sociological structures in the system, including the chieftaincy institution. However, the idea of dysfunctionality in Merton's approach of functionalism offset the focus of stability as argued by traditional functionalists. Hence, the concept of change is encapsulated in this approach of functionalism based on tensions, conflicts and contradictions in the social system (Elwell, 2013).

Social mechanisms within the traditional society, including the interrelations and cohesiveness of mutually supporting structures and elements of the system, harness the development and maintenance of the entire system. Chieftaincy institution in Ghana serves as one of the multiple structures that mutually supports the development and maintenance of the social system. It thus, suggests that the structure has a functional orientation for the stability of the social system. As argued by structural functionalists, each part (structure/institution) of the society has a function that together with other structures, promote equilibrium. Hence, the chieftaincy institution in Ghana has been recognized as a formidable institution that contributes to the development of the society and thus, has been established by the 1992 constitution of Ghana in article 270 to 277. Meanwhile, Elwell (2013) contended that social structures and mechanisms are not always effective. The accumulation of dysfunctions (conflicts, tensions and contradictions) within the

structure (chieftaincy) of the system often affects the stability, brewing consequences on other structures and the social system which usually leads to systematic change. Consequently, the resulting dysfunctions (conflicts and tensions) of elements such as chieftaincy succession, within chieftaincy in the Akuapem Traditional Area has consequences for the maintenance of the structure and the society. Therefore, an analysis of the deviance within chieftaincy reveals issues that affect the dominant orientation of the structure.

The concept of succession conflict is seen as a dominant dysfunction within the chieftaincy institution. In the view of Ahiave (2015), chieftaincy in Ghana is brewed with conflicts and thus, has been tagged as the potential source of instability and disequilibrium in the society, affecting development. It therefore, gives premise to locate the research in the structural functionalism theory using Merton's approach. Merton (1996) cited in Elwell (2013) argued that, there are two major functions of a structure; manifest functions and latent functions. Noteworthy, preserving of customs and custodians of stool property are some manifest functions of the chieftaincy institution in the Akuapem Traditional Area in the Ghanaian society. However, certain dysfunctionalities within the institution including conflict, creates pressure for change and disrupts the equilibrium and stability of the society. Conflicts can be said to be inevitable in the society yet, if not tackled and resolved, disrupts the complex social system. Perhaps, the institution in its entirety is made up of several elements that make up the structure hence, interrelates and mutually work towards the promotion of stability and efficiency within the structure. However, functional unity cannot be assumed. Hence, dysfunctionality of elements within the structure becomes a concern that needs to be analyzed as it may have consequences on other structures and the entire social system. Chieftaincy in Akuapem Traditional Area has been deemed a relevant aspect to the social system; yet, the conflict can be deemed as a dysfunctionality within it. As argued by Merton (1996) in Elwell (2013), dysfunctionality of a structure within the social system has consequences. Taking the Akuapem chieftaincy conflict into account, exploring the dysfunctionality is necessary to understanding the dynamics as well as consequences of the conflict on the society. Understanding the functionalist perspective is necessary to finding lasting peace in Akuapem Traditional Area.

Enormous literature exists to discuss chieftaincy conflicts in the traditional societies of Ghana. Chieftaincy succession conflict has been argued by many as a possible source of instability in the society (Ahiave, 2013). In many societies, the protracted nature of these conflicts has implications towards the development of the society. The dynamics of chieftaincy succession conflict in the society therefore looked at the trends of conflict development in the institution in many societies, the factors that contribute to the conflict and the issues involved in chieftaincy succession conflict. Scholarly, the dynamics of chieftaincy succession conflict was examined via four basic sub-themes; dynamics of conflict, chieftaincy in Ghana, chieftaincy succession conflicts, and the causes of chieftaincy succession conflicts.

Chieftaincy in Ghana as a culture issue has been an important aspect of almost every society as it serves as one of the multiple structures in a complex social system that works towards the solidarity in societies. Chieftaincy as an organ of culture is undoubtedly one of the best-known traditional institutions in many societies in Ghana. Understanding the origin of the institution

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is necessary to unravel the conflicts (dysfunctionality) in the structure. Much progress has been made in the field of culture and chieftaincy at the normative and the operational levels but clearly the gap in the definition, history, existence and relevance of the institution in Ghana remains wide. Scholarly works abound in defining and tracing the historical antecedents of chieftaincy resulting in expression of its relevance.

Extant literature on chieftaincy contended that the definitions and historical antecedents of chieftaincy in Ghana are broad yet, have some positive connotations in its existence. Meanwhile, some scholars contend that the historical antecedent of chieftaincy has a negative implication to development in many societies. Defining and tracing the historical antecedent of the structure was necessary to the development of the study. The argument of Eshun and Dankwa (2019), Owusu-Mensah (2013) and Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) (2006), converge on the definition, history and relevance of chieftaincy to the Ghanaian society.

Specifically, Eshun and Dankwa (2019), discussed the meaning and origin of chieftaincy in their book entitled *"culture of chieftaincy, governance and development"*. According to Eshun and Dankwa (2019), chieftaincy can be described as either a position, or period of rule by a chief or a population in an area being ruled by a chief. Thus, they viewed chieftaincy as the rank of being a chief or the process in traditional leadership where a person called a 'Chief' or 'Queen mother' leads or rule a group of people in a traditional setting. They argued that chieftaincy in Ghana is a system of ruling in the traditional society. The major argument of their discussion is that the importance of the institution to Ghanaian society just like major structures such as education, the judiciary and many more has rendered it highly recognized. Chieftaincy institution in Ghana is recognized due to important roles of chiefs and queen mothers in the socio-political arena which has contributed to the functioning of the society.

Eshun and Dankwa (2019) argued that the roots of the institution are barely known, however, they recognized that chieftaincy has been in existence since pre-colonial era through to independence and post-independence era and has endured many challenges. The argument of Eshun and Dankwa (2019) can be located within culture and governance discourse. They assumed that chieftaincy is a key structure in the complex social system of Ghana. This is to create balance in society. Their argument is based on important historical analysis of chieftaincy through the pre-colonial, colonial, independence and post-independence era. The fact of their argument is that, many chiefs have played and continue to play important roles in local communities (respective traditional areas) that complement the actions of the central government. It is perhaps as a result of this that culminated the decision to establish and guarantee the chieftaincy institution in article 270(1) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana. However, there are instances that the institution has become dysfunctional, affecting the stability of the society. They argued that the institution provides a sense of solidarity among members of the society, but that being said, the structure has had varied history and character as it evolved. Yet, Eshun and Dankwa (2019) see the institution as a necessary tool for stability whiles many see it as an agent of instability.

Consequently, Owusu-Mensah (2013) postulated that chieftaincy of any society is just the custodian of the customary laws that regulate civil behavior in traditional governance of many

or almost all societies. Key to his argument, he asserted that the institution has been a resilient one and thus, has survived all alterations in Ghana's socio-political history, which has been necessary for its integration into the governance structure of the country. Secondly, the institution has a critical feature of a defined structure; a structure where gender roles, responsibilities and positions of males and females are well defined in accordance with the traditions and customs of the people. In agreement with Eshun and Dankwa (2019) on the establishment of the institution by law, Owusu-Mensah (2013) recognized the constitutional provision and the Act of Parliament (Chieftaincy Act, 2008, Act 759).

His discussion is located in politics and governance perspective. He clearly distinguished the make-up of chieftaincy in the pre-colonial, colonial, independence and post-independence era. He argued that, the institution was a formidable one in precolonial era and thus, was structured in a similar level of social and political cohesion in their respective communities as were found in Western countries at the time. Consequently, in the era of colonialism, chieftaincy in Ghana lost a bit of control as compared to pre-colonial era. He argued that chieftaincy relied upon British recognition. There was no form of clearly defined authority for the chiefs. The colonial regime changed the face of chieftaincy. More so, independence saw the reformation of the chieftaincy institution in Ghana. The space occupied by chiefs was rallied upon by some political leaders after independence (Owusu-Mensah, 2013). There came the need to maintain the institution in the socio-political space of Ghana but under a form of state control. The institution was therefore guaranteed in the 1957 and 1960 constitutions in accordance with customs and usages. However, the relationship between some members of the central government and the chief were not very cordial. Yet, Owusu-Mensah (2013), argued that the institution is seen as a primary spectrum of the Ghanaian society and that no one dares undermine it. The argument is corroborated by the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development (CIKOD) (2006) who asserted that a very large proportion of the Ghanaian society claim allegiance to one kind of chief or another. Their argument is based on the study of historical and contemporary advantages of the institution in the Ghanaian societies. The fact of their argument is that the institution is deemed as the repository of history and traditional ways, as well as the custodians of the indigenous traditions, customs and society of Ghana (Owusu-Mensah, 2013). It has thus contributed to working towards the equilibrium and promoting homeostasis in the society.

It is an important and respected institution that occupies the space created by Ghana's modern political structure in terms of customary arbitration and law enforcement at the communal level. Meanwhile, this seemingly revered institution in the Ghanaian society is bred with issues including conflicts, which Merton (1936) in Elwell (2013) described as a dysfunctionality of an institution, affecting social cohesion.

Chieftaincy can be operationalized as an organized system of leadership within some African traditional settings in accordance with the traditional customs and usages of the area. In Ghana, chieftaincy is seen as a formidable institution that pays its dues to local and national development. As an institution, it is said to be a system and structure that guides and regulates the activities of traditional leaders in their local jurisdictions.

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Understanding the concept of chieftaincy is relevant to raveling issues in the institution as a structure of the complex social order. Scholars and authors cited in the study are duly commended for their contribution to the growing discourse of culture, chieftaincy, and ethnic conflicts. The arguments of the extant literature are relevant to contemporary chieftaincy issues as it gives an understanding to the journey in which the institution has trended to unearth and examine alternatives to resolving the dysfunctionality of the institution. The concept of chieftaincy; definition and history, helps in tracing the very existence of the structure and the dynamics. It helps to know what needs to be relooked at for the management, resolution of issues and the transformation of the institution in promoting of stability and development of the society.

The literature of the referenced scholars is related to this work because it sought to look at the conflict in the institution specifically, the chieftaincy institution of Akuapem Traditional Area. Therefore, the meaning and the historical antecedents helps in tracing and understanding issues of the institution which is key to examining the dynamics of chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area. Relatively little attention given to historical precepts and dynamics of the institution are issues that extant literature fails to identify. Therefore, tracing the current conflicts to the history and dynamics of the institution which is yet to be rigorously documented contributes to filling this gap. Thus, an understanding of the history and dynamics of the institution in the Akuapem Traditional Area would ensure effective examining of the conflict, identifying all factors to it and thereby providing relevant knowledge for its resolution.

Knowing the dynamics of conflict is very imperative in our contemporary society. Conflict prevention continues to be an important focus for stakeholders in the society particularly, those involved in conflict prevention and management, development agencies and academics over several decades now. In the wake of continuous peacebuilding within African states for development, Ghana has been recognised as a relatively peaceful country. Undoubtedly, the contribution of the chieftaincy institution to Ghana's peacebuilding efforts and development cannot be understated. Essentially, the institution has been encapsulated in the 1992 constitution of Ghana for its relevant roles in the development and governance of local states within the country.

Meanwhile, scholars including Ahiave (2013) and Awedoba (2009) have indicated that chieftaincy has been seen as a probable source of instability and insecurity as a result of multiple conflicts bred within the institution of many traditional area. Ahorsu (2014) corroborated that many African states institutions including chieftaincy, are vulnerable to factionalism (conflicts) which negatively affects states' capacities to maintain order. Hence, Ahiave (2013) positioned that chieftaincy is bedeviled with numerous conflicts. Conflicts are inevitable in the society. Usually, the ones surrounding chieftaincy are protracted, defiling any solution (Tonah, 2012). Meanwhile, understanding and tackling the causes or factors of chieftaincy conflicts, as indicated by the Department for International Development (DFID) (2015) is useful to raveling sustaining peace in afflicted traditional societies. Not only are stakeholders concerned with conflict situations, but are keen on the factors or causes that ignite and protract the situation (Debrah, Owusu-Mensah, & Gyampo, 2014). Hence, given the high profile of chieftaincy

conflicts in Ghana, critical attention with feasible assessment on its factors needs to be addressed.

Eshun and Dankwa (2019) expounded that chieftaincy conflicts are fueled by several factors that ignites and, in most cases, sustains the situation. The causes of chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana as would be discussed has more than one facetted factor that converge to result in the issue (Issifu, 2015). There is no single causative element to chieftaincy conflicts.

The antecedents of many chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana raises concern within traditional societies on efforts to address its multiple occurrences. Tsikata and Seini (2004) considered that the multidimensional nature of chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana are as a result of structural rigidities within many traditional societies. Ahiave (2013) citing example from the Dagbon conflict expounded that chieftaincy conflicts usually emanates due to structural and behavioural lags within the society and among the parties involved. The structural rigidities, as indicated by Herbert (2017) are interwoven into the system within the society. It is only right to support that lag which span across cultural, political, social and economic factors creates an avenue for conflict when it deteriorates the system. Anamzoya and Tonah (2012) indicated that the cultural guidelines or statutes in chieftaincy of many traditional societies reveals its changing malleability and susceptibility to conflict. Yet, chieftaincy is viewed by many to have pertinent roles in promoting and sustaining the country's peace for development (Ahiave, 2013). Even though it is seen as a formidable structure that contributes to the society's development, issues of structural lags located within the norms, statutes and customs are a bigger issue most societies encounter.

Similarly, Eshun and Dankwa (2019) indicated that succession to a vacant throne contributes to chieftaincy conflicts. They viewed that there are mostly questionable actions revolving around nomination and installation, issues of recognition and de-recognition of candidates, as well as issues of eligibility of candidates on chieftaincy successions in most traditional areas in Ghana. Most traditional states are bedeviled with several conflicts emerging from succession to vacant stools (Eshun & Dankwa, 2019). In corroboration to their argument, Oduro-Awusi and Afro (2013) contended that a major cause of chieftaincy conflict is based on contestation over succession to a particular stool or traditional position. Meanwhile, societies have over the years developed procedures based on their customs and traditions through which a person is selected as a chief. At the same time, the Chieftaincy Act, 2008 (Act 759) has outlined procedures and guidelines for Kingmakers on the installation, enskinment, destoolment and deskinment of chiefs. Tonah (2011) viewed that, issues of succession within the institution at all levels usually breeds conflicts. Hence, multiple indications of Ghana's experiences on succession conflicts are prevalent within the southern sector of the country and some being observed in the Northern sector (Bonbande, 2011; Awedoba, 2009; Ahiave, 2013; Ahorsu, 2015).

Anamzoya and Tonah (2012) found out in their study of the Nanum conflict that power struggle between multiple actors resulted in the chieftaincy conflict. The most powerful kingmakers contested over who to choose the chief; claimants to the position of Bimbilla Naa also contested over what they believe is their right hence, resulted in a chieftaincy conflict. Awedoba (2009) supported with the view that showcasing of power which led to factions doing diverse cultural

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practices amounted to many chieftaincy conflicts. Hence, the quest for power is seen as a major source for the ignition and exacerbation of conflicts.

However, Debrah, Owusu-Mensah and Gyampo (2014) contended that power struggle within chieftaincy conflicts is motivated by the control of economic resources within the traditional society. It thus suggests that the control of resources such as land, and other stool properties becomes the motive of many royals and sometimes non-royals to compete for the throne. The excessive competition and struggles to possess and control resources result in the quest acquire communal power and influence (Debrah, Owusu-Mensah & Gyampo, 2014).

Chieftaincy conflicts are ignited by sources that are viewed as root causes or primordial factors. However, conflicts within chieftaincy may go beyond primordial causes and thus, solely basing on such factors implies a degree of incomprehension towards the analyses of the issue. Penu and Osei-Kufuor (2016) contended that ethnic conflicts including issues of chieftaincy have interwoven factors that brings the dynamisms and complexities to the table.

Hence, Issifu (2015) argued that most chieftaincy conflicts are intractable as a result of lack of justice within the system, political interference in the chieftaincy institution and the relegation of traditional conflict resolution methods. Eshun and Dankwa (2019) added that aside the underlying factors of chieftaincy conflicts, the situation is usually exacerbated by politicization of the institution, lack of transparency and accountability as well as misuse of stool properties result in the exacerbation of chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana.

It can therefore be inferred from literature that the causative factors of chieftaincy conflicts are multiple and complex. These multiple and complex factors fuel the ignition of conflict situations within chieftaincy in different traditional societies. It is pertinent to acknowledge that addressing conflicts and other issues within chieftaincy requires an understanding of it factors or causes that influences the dynamism of the situation.

Much progress has been made in the field of conflict prevention with much focus centred on conflict analyses. Herbert (2017) in his write up "*Guide to conflict analyses*" made crucial analytics on conflict analysis. Conflict analysis is a structured process of analysis to understand conflict (Conflict Sensitive Consortium, 2012; Herbert, 2017). Herbert (2017) argued that conflict analysis focuses on the conflict profile, the actors and their perspectives, the structural and proximate causes of conflict and the dynamics of how these elements interact. His argument is corroborated by Fisher, Abrahim-Abdi, Ludin, Smith, William and Williams (2000) who argued that a conflict analysis examines open conflict, surface conflict and latent conflict. Key to the conception by Herbert (2017), conflict analysis which includes understanding conflict situations is an important process to finding lasting peace in conflict afflicted areas. His argument focused on analyses that ravel the dynamics to conflicts. He assumed that the trends to a conflict help provide understanding to issues of the conflict which could be beneficial in finding a lasting peace. Herbert (2017) postulated that focusing on dynamics helps understand 'why' and 'how' the conflict is escalating, intensifying, decreasing, spreading, contracting or being in a stalemate. He posited that an analysis of dynamics ensures effective and efficient understanding of the conflict and the interaction of the elements involved in the conflict. The fact of his argument is that conflict analysis provides a comprehensive and easily accessible

assessment of issues to the conflict. He argued that conflict dynamic analysis can prioritize issues that gives better understanding to the conflict and thus results in providing a lasting peace. Yet, most conflict situations like the one in Akuapem still lingers. It has therefore become necessary that understanding the dynamics of the conflict is critical to any effective intervention strategy.

## METHODOLOGY AND STUDY AREA

Qualitatively, the case study research design was employed for this study. The qualitative approach offers the opportunity to effectively explore issues involved in the study of the chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area. In the view of Berg and Howard (2012), qualitative approach to research is based on the meanings, concepts, and descriptions social actors bring to a particular interaction. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011), contended that a research design is a framework of strategies or methods of inquiry uniquely designed to fit the nature of the research and guide the conduct of the study. In this regard, the case study design of the qualitative approach was employed for the study. This design was adopted, as issues were looked at in context of the society.

Research setting is the Akuapem Traditional Area, in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Being the location under which the issue is studied, the traditional area is described as one of the most revered states in Ghana. The Akuapem Traditional Area covers a fairly large area, about 450 square kilometers, in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It comprises about 30 main towns and about 200 satellite towns, villages or suburbs. However, traditional governance system categorizes the traditional area into 17 traditional states under five main established divisions, with the highest traditional seat in Akropong-Akuapem in the Akuapem North Municipality.

It is important to establish that the traditional area of Akuapem transcends one municipality; it includes all the towns in the Akuapem North Municipality and the Okere District as well as fairly large part of the Akuapem South Municipality. The divisions have operated fairly effective and harmoniously for the stability and development of the state. However, occasional conflicts among the divisions and within the chieftaincy system contribute to several challenges of the traditional area. The Akuapem Traditional Area is populated largely by two ethnic groups, namely Akans and Guans, however, recent development in population issues have seen the area becoming more of a cosmopolitan (Akuapem Kingdom, 2019). Located within the tropical rain forest, the Akuapem Traditional Area is largely covered by a range of forest vegetation amidst humid weather. The lands of the traditional area are administered and protected by the traditional authorities and the municipal assembly.

Consequently, the proximity of the traditional area to the nation's capital and some major commercial nerves of the country allows socio-economic interaction between the traditional area and the neighbouring business hubs in terms of trade, movement of, and access to goods, services and larger market. The economy of Akuapem Traditional Area is based on three major activities: commerce, subsistence agriculture and small-scale industries. With the numerous states within the traditional area, several market days exist during which local agricultural

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products (such as crop vegetations, livestock, and poultry) as well as manufactured products and services are traded. The traditional area serves as an important commercial point for tourism within the country. In addition, agricultural activities are engaged in the traditional area. Noteworthy, crop production, livestock and poultry production are essential agricultural activities in the area. However, the agricultural businesses are not done on a very large scale. One-man and family-run businesses are also an important economic venture in the traditional area. These kinds of businesses are characterized by diverse small-scale industries; sawmill, weaving and dress making, animal feed production, hotels and restaurants, food joints and many more. The associated conflicts in the society can have long-term attributions to the economic development of the society.

The chieftaincy institution which is guaranteed in the 1992 constitution of Ghana has been encapsulated in the traditional area together with the district and municipal authorities instituted by the state under the local government law (PNDC Law 207, 1988) to provide local administration. Chiefs, in the traditional area serve as custodians of customs and traditions in the area and thus, are held in high esteem by members of the traditional area. The dominant social structure of the area is made of both patrilineal social structure of the Guans and the matrilineal structure of the Akans. Invariably, the paramountcy (Ofori stool) of the Akuapem which is occupied by the Akan society make use of the matrilineal social structure. The paramountcy of Akuapem Traditional Area, by customs and tradition is occupied by three royal gates namely, Nketia Obuo royal family, Ama Ogyinae royal family and Sakyiabea royal family in a rotational manner. The Sakyiabea royal family currently has the mandate to provide the paramount chief for the traditional area. However, it is by this process of succession that has bred conflict in the Akuapem Traditional Area.

The population of the study included adult members of the Akuapem Traditional Area who have lived and experienced the conflict in the society for the past five (5) years. For the purpose of credible empirical study, obtaining adequate sample is fundamentally necessary. Providing enough and adequate data is crucial to credible empirical study. Yet, evidence from literature posits that there are no explicit rules for sampling in qualitative study (Faanu, 2016). However, most qualitative scholars argue that saturation of data is necessary and efficient for qualitative research. Therefore, the sample size for the study was determined by a point of saturation to the research. Out of the entire population for the study, thirty-four (34) participants were drawn to participate in the study. Thus, relevant data from participants were obtained till a point of saturation.

Essentially, the research sampled from among the population of Akuapem Traditional Area, adult members who have experienced the conflict in the past 5 years. Accordingly, three (3) members of the Akuapem Traditional Council, four (4) highly ranked members of the Akuapem North Municipal Assembly, nine (9) members from the three royal gates to the paramountcy, and eighteen (18) other adult members of the general populace in Akuapem were sampled.

Using extreme case sampling, the study included participants from the traditional council of the area and the Akuapem North Municipal Assembly. This is because; members of the traditional council and the municipal assembly were seen as people with high pedigree and may possess unique characteristics and relevant knowledge on the issue. Further, critical case sampling was

employed to sample participants from the royal gates to the paramountcy. This sample provided possible diverse information or knowledge to the study by the participants. Subsequently, convenience sampling was employed to choose participants.

Instruments for data collection were semi-structured interview guide, focus group discussion and observation protocols. Trustworthiness was ensured in the study. Polit and Beck (2014) argued that trustworthiness is essential to ensuring confidence in data gathered, analyzed and interpreted. It also deals with the quality and relevance of the instrument and methods used for the study. Trustworthiness issue of credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability were adhered to in the study.

Ethically, the issues of anonymity and confidentiality was ensured by not disclosing the identity of respondents in any form. The identity of the respondents was devoid of any linkage with their personal responses.

Thematic analysis of data in qualitative study is employed in analyzing the field data. Barton (2012) posited that data analysis is the process of describing and interpreting data in relation to the research question under consideration in the study. In categorizing the processed data for coding, themes were identified linking them to theoretical concepts and the emerged themes for analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In exploring the chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area, the study sought to uncover and understand the issue in terms of the dynamics in the chieftaincy conflict. Hence, it was pertinent to ask critical questions while exploring the conflict situation in Akuapem. This research question guided the study - What are the dynamics involved in the chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem? This section presents and discusses the results obtained through administering the instruments and methods adopted for the study. The discussion indicated how they interact with extant literature and the theory. The presentation and discussions are done under themes that emerged from the research question and data obtained from the field study in the research setting. The dynamics of the conflict as a theme is further broken down into sub-themes for critical discussions and effective understanding of the conflict. Understanding conflict requires analysis of issues and relevant elements that drives and shapes it. The dynamics of a conflict explains how the variables in conflict change over the cause of time. The dynamics revealed in the study underscored the understanding of conflict situation in Akuapem Traditional Area. In exploring the dynamics of the conflict, participants were interviewed on the causes, nature and frames of the conflict. The results in these variables interact to show a multiple but complex and complicated dynamics involved.

### Causes of the Conflict
An important element of revealing the dynamics of the conflict in the Akuapem Traditional Area was the analyses of causes of the conflict. Participants of the study agreed to the issue of conflict existing in the area. Most of them indicated it as a worrying factor to the stability of the society. Therefore, the reasons to the conflict in the traditional area were discussed. Some comments from participants stated:

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*"There is a contention of who is to be declared as the paramount chief in the Akuapem Traditional Area. For me, I can say we have a paramount chief in Akuapem and he's in the person of Oseadeeyo Kwasi Akuffo III but we all know there is some rift in the community which has brought a little tension"* (Field Data, 2021).

*"I can say there was a first installation of a paramount chief by the queen and then a second installation of another person who is hailed as the Paramount Chief now. As I said earlier, we have a matrilineal system. So, the two individuals who were in the process of being installed, both hail from the same royal family with the current chief said to be the uncle of the one whose process was annulled"* (Field Data, 2021).

The comments indicated that there have been contentions over the enstoolment of a paramount chief in the traditional area. Participants' views confirm the experiences during observations that the issue in the Akuapem Traditional Area is one that hovers around succession of a paramount chief. This implies that there has been the problem of chieftaincy succession conflict in the area. The argument confirms that peace, as indicated by Ahiave (2013), in most Ghanaian societies have been vulnerable to most intermittent conflict usually as a result of chieftaincy. It can be argued that the conflict is an ethnic conflict however, opposite to an inter-ethnic conflict as several studies on conflict and peacebuilding by scholars such as Ahiave (2013) and Asamoah (2014) show. Further comments by most participants confirmed and clarified that the major cause of the conflict was about the succession to the highest political seat in the traditional area. Some participants commented that:

*"…the dynamics are that when a stool is vacant, they lookout for a candidate from among the royals and here we have three of them; the Ama Ogyinae, Nketia and Sakyiabea royal houses. It is the turn of the Sakyiabea house so, if there is any conflict at all, it is coming from that gate not the other two. When it happens like that, I think the changing situations is as a result of the understanding the modern people have today concerning chieftaincy as against the established norms the old people laid down. Here, I see that we just rally behind someone and that is the end, if it is not approved, we are not ready to compromise, that shouldn't be the process. They should allow them to go through the system and after they have finished with everything, we all agree to the candidate that they think qualifies to be the chief. That is how things are supposed to be done. So, the whole thing is about the enstoolment of the paramount chief"* (Field Data, 2021).

*"We all know the challenges that have been around the paramountcy over the past few years before the current occupant was able to ascend to the throne. Even so, there are many who disagree with what went on during the enstoolment. The process of one chief was quashed based on the challenge by the opposition and a new thing was supposed to be done but the other team also installed their chief which seemed distorted because what the court issued wasn't done in that manner. We have two groups or individuals with the support of some people challenging for the highest throne in all the Akuapem lands"* (Field Data, 2021).

Participants commented that the installation and enstoolment of a paramount chief in the traditional area have bred conflict. Both cited comments from participants, revealed a contestation over the paramountcy position in the traditional area. Their comments are confirmed by a petition filed to the Judicial committee of the Eastern Regional House of chiefs in 2018 by Nkrabeah and Associates law firm on behalf of the aberewatia of the Sakyiabea royal family, seeking to quash the enstoolment of one candidate which was supervised by the queen. This seems to suggest that contestations over the paramountcy position have been the main cause of the conflict in the traditional area. Further, expressions by participants suggest that chieftaincy succession as the main cause of the conflict seems to be rooted in several key causes that resulted in its complexities.

**Power struggle**

An apparent dataset of the study elicited through exploration of reasons for the conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area was the struggle over the paramountcy throne. It also showed a contestation over who has the power or authority to select a candidate for the position. Contestations over who has legitimate right to the throne which saw the installation of two chiefs as well as who has the authority to select a candidate which saw some individuals selecting their choices for the process of enstoolment. Participants viewed that as the major cause of the chieftaincy conflict. Typical comments from participants included:

> "*Well, the simplest answer I can give is that, it is within the Sakyiabea family and in the family just like all the other gates, we have 'mmerewatia' who selects the candidate. I know in the families there might be many who go through the process of vetting and voting or selection. However, in their case, I understand there are two who were actively involved in the final stages of selection and that is where the problem started. Now both were initiated into the process of chief making which isn't supposed to be. We can't have two chiefs*" (Field Data, 2021).

> "*We heard the family had chosen one person but then another name also popped up. There were even three names but one dropped out leaving the two. There could have been an agreement but you know how power looks like in the eyes of men. It didn't happen that way. Here, both were involved in this confusion as created by the two groups. In fact, the groups are about the two of them and maybe the queen but I think the queen has a choice amongst the two so…but if they had chosen only one person we would have lived in peace*" (Field Data, 2021).

Participants' responses indicated that the vacancy of the paramountcy position which was to be occupied by the Sakyiabea royal gate saw a contestation of two leading candidates from the family, whose parties believed would be a good fit for the position of the paramount chief in the traditional area. The comments lamented that in the earlier stages of selection, several royals may be engaged but, in their case, two candidates seemed to be the preferred choice of stakeholders in the process. This implies that the conflict started within a particular royal family as a result of choosing a candidate for the position. The findings here correspond with the work of Anamzoya and Tonah (2012) on chieftaincy succession dispute in Nanum that power struggle is seen as major cause of conflict.

The views of the participants support experiences during the observation sessions. It was observed that most people are involved in this conflict along the lines of the two candidates. It became apparent that the contestation of the paramountcy position is based on the concept of intergeneration. Individuals were engaged in focus group discussion on this issue of power struggle. One comment out of the conversation was that:

> "...again, this was done according to generations. If he goes and the kingmakers assert that he is not of good record, the family chooses another person, maybe from the same generation or the next if the previous generation has no befitting males for the position The one who was earlier in the process of installation is the nephew of the newly installed chief. It isn't right for the nephew to be installed whiles his uncle or the generation before him hasn't taken their birth right yet" (Field Data, 2021).

This seems to suggest that the selection of the paramount chief was to be done according to generations of royals at a particular point in time. However, it also lamented on the appropriateness of the individual being presented. Another comment stressed much on the appropriateness of the candidate.

> "We talk of one being an uncle and the other being a nephew but the most important thing is the appropriateness of the person. So, we talk of 'fit and proper'. The person should be fit for the job and when he goes through the processes, there are people who will check his appropriateness for the thing. So, it is not just about being older or younger" (Field Data, 2021).

The comment indicated that even though generations of royals count in the selection of the candidate for the position of the paramount chief, the appropriateness of the position is the most important thing in the installation process. The comments seem to suggest that the contestation over the paramountcy has some roots in the qualities of the royals.

Participants' views suggested that only one could be the paramount chief. The comments indicated that the conflict seemed to have been as a result of the contestations of the two candidates who were known to be the heirs to the throne. Meanwhile, some participants indicated that seven (7) elderly women known as 'mmeapanyin' (elderly women) including the 'aberewatia' (head of the elderly women) of the family casted lots on the two candidates. One participant stated:

> "...the queen gave the family the opportunity to choose from among the two candidates. In their house, there are elderly women who do this. They are known as the mmeapanyin and in their family, they are seven (7). These women casted lots and five (5) of them went to one candidate who was in the first process of being installed and was accepted by the queen and the Asonahene whiles, two went to the other candidate who has been installed as the chief. This was before the death of Nana Dokua I. When the new queen came, she made them start the process again but it resulted in the same 5:2 votes in favour of the one who won in the first process. So, the process of installing the chief started but unfortunately, the other faction also started theirs so there were two people in the making of a paramount chief which is not acceptable" (Field Data, 2021).

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The participant expressed that the process of installing the paramount chief started with choosing one candidate for the position via voting or casting of lots by women who have been tasked with such duties as 'mmeapanyin' (elderly women) with their head being the 'aberewatia' (head of the elderly women). The views seem to suggest that majority of the 'mmeapanyin' voted for one candidate who was accepted by the queen and the 'Asonahene', hence, initiated the process of kingmaking for the acclaimed winner during the casting of lots. However, it was also indicated that another candidate was initiated into the process of kingmaking which led to the contestations over the ascension to the throne. It implies that the contestations by the two candidates to the throne have resulted in the factions created within the conflict. The argument supports the view of Keator (2011) who argued that conflict is a misunderstanding between individuals that usually becomes hard to negotiate.

The complexities of the conflict seemed intensified following the high level of power struggle over who selects the candidate for paramountcy position in the Akuapem Traditional Area. Participants highlighted that:

> "Our issue became prevalent when the queen sided with one faction and installed Odehye Kwasi Akuffo which was challenged by the aberewatia of the Sakyiabea house and her group in a petition filed in the Regional House of Chiefs because she said she wasn't informed about the process which later resulted in the installation of the paramount chief we have now" (Field Data, 2021).

> "The queen installed a chief but the aberewatia of the current ruling house says she has also appointed another chief" (Field Data, 2021).

> "...the queen appealed against the decision by the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs with the goal of being declared as the rightful authority to select a candidate for the position" (Field Data, 2021).

> "So, I think it started from who enstools who and why the person needs to be enstooled…" (Field Data, 2021)

The solicited views from participants denoted that the authority to select a candidate for the installation and enstoolment became a bone of contention by some traditional authorities. These comments seem to indicate that the conflict has also been as a result of the contestation over power and authority by some stakeholders responsible for the installation of the paramount chief. The field data expounded and confirmed that the contestation over who to select a candidate from a royal family to the throne was an apparent cause to the conflict. It is of no surprise that petitions were filed in the judicial committee of the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs by the aberewatia in 2018 as indicated in the petition letter signed by their lawyer. Experiences from observations and discussions denote that an appeal was filed by the opposing faction at the National House of Chiefs in 2020 to quash the ruling of the Eastern Regional House. In a focus group discussion, one participant commented that:

> "In the case of the queen mother's absence, the mmerewatia in all the three families work in her stead. Immediately the queen is installed, she becomes the aberewatia for all the three houses. They have forgotten that the three houses came from one woman,

*so, the queen is not an outsider to any royal house. Traditionally, the stool is for the women; they choose the men to occupy it. So, if the rotation to the stool lands in a particular family, the aberewatia in that house becomes an obeapanyin since the queen is around and doubles as a queen and aberewatia. The aberewatia joins the other elderly women in the family to select a candidate. The family then sits and this is by only women who casts lots to choose who they deem right for the candidacy. If casting of lots do not yield any proper results, the queen has the authority. Even if the family chooses someone, the queen can reject him. That is the power of the queen"* (Field Data, 2021).

The argument of the participant indicated the power and authority of the queen to choose a candidate from a royal family in going through the process of being enstooled as the paramount chief in the Akuapem Traditional Area. It implies that the queen has the highest authority in the process of enstoolment. However, it was contended by other participants who seemed to oppose this view that the queen has a role to play in the enstoolment of a chief but it is the aberewatia who chooses or appoints. One typical comment of this argument state:

*"In the Sakyiabea family, the aberewatia who has been gazetted is responsible for selecting a candidate in the family for onward process for installation. However, one obeapanyin in the family lobbied with some people for her son to be installed, forgetting it is the aberewatia who has the authority and responsibility to choose the candidate…"* (Field Data, 2021).

The comment suggests that the authority for the selection of the candidate from the family lies in the hand of the aberewatia. This is in disagreement with the comment which suggests the queen to have authority over the selection from the family. One interesting revelation in this comment is the fact that it indicated that the aberewatia has had gazette. This seems to imply that she operates in her capacity based on the gazette. It can be inferred from the findings that, the disagreement over who selects a successor to the highest traditional position, as indicated in the study of Dagbon chieftaincy conflict and Nanum chieftaincy dispute by Tsikata and Seini (2004) and Anamzoya and Tonah (2012) respectively, is seen as a cause for the conflict.

Following the selection of the candidate is onward presentation to the kingmakers who per the views of participants engage the selected candidate in series of vetting processes to ascertain the readiness and appropriateness of the person. The participants hinted on the disagreement of the choice of candidate which led to division among the kingmakers hence, the installation of two chiefs. One participant commented that:

*"…among the kingmakers, the queen could have lobbied to gain most of them on her side. The issue is, the queen and the Asonahene are part of the kingmakers. In total, they are eleven. The conflict divided the kingmakers who were supposed to be a unit. Four of them went to one side, while seven of them went to another side. The majority opted for the one installed as the chief now, while the other people were in support of the one whose process was nullified by the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs. So, each faction started with their processes until the whole thing landed in Koforidua"* (Field Data, 2021).

The comment indicated that, two groups emanated among the kingmakers along the lines of the individuals contesting for the chieftaincy position. This implies that, the contestation over the paramountcy position emanated as a result of the disagreement among kingmakers over the choice of candidate. Anamzoya and Tonah (2012) concluded in their study of Nanum conflict that behind the contest of chieftaincy title, there is a power struggle and division among the major kingmakers in the traditional area. This seems to be the case of the Akuapem Traditional Area. The exacerbation of conflict in the traditional area was further complicated by the contestation of processes involved in the succession of the paramount chief.

**Contestation of chieftaincy succession processes**
The study discovered that the conflict has lingered as a result of contradictions and disagreement over processes employed by both factions for the installation of the paramount chief in the Akuapem Traditional Area. Participants expounded that; different processes were engaged in by different members in both factions during the installation. Examples of participants views included:

> "*The queen installed one as the paramount chief but the abrewatia of the family in which the chief is supposed to hail from says she has also selected another candidate who has been installed as the paramount chief by some of the kingmakers. All of them believe what they did was right. Per what I know and what seems right, if one has not gone through the right processes for the installation, then you can't be called a chief*" (Field Data, 2021).

The comment indicated that separate installation processes were initiated for the two candidates contesting for the paramountcy position by opposing stakeholders respectively. The comment seems to suggest that the issue of chieftaincy succession conflict in Akuapem over the paramountcy resulted from the challenges and contradictions in procedures employed by factions for the installation and enstoolment.

Personal observation identified that, most community members narrated issues involved in the conflict with passion and in a way that shields their activities and interests. Narratives that indicated the contestation of processes involved in the chieftaincy succession processes included:

> "*...in any Akan community here in Akuapem, when there is a vacant stool, it is the duty of the elderly women known as "mmeapanyin" who elect or select candidate for the position of chieftaincy. Amongst the elderly women in the family, there is their head called the aberewatia. So, in the case of any absence of the queen, there are mmerewatia in all the three families who work in her stead. One thing is, immediately the queen is installed she becomes the aberewatia for all the three houses. They have forgotten that all the three houses came from one woman; so, the queen is not an outsider to any royal family. On this note, if the rotation of the stool lands in a particular family, the aberewatia in that house becomes the obaapanyin and joins the other elderly women in the family to select a candidate. Hence, the queen will send an entourage to the family to provide forth a candidate. The family(mmeapanyin) then sits and cast lots to choose the candidate. If casting of lots do not yield any proper*

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*results, the queen has the right, whether she's from the family or not to choose for the family. Even if the family chooses someone, the queen can reject him; that's the power of the queen"* (Field Data, 2021).

The participant further commented that:

*In this circumstance, the queen didn't deny or choose anyone she gave the family the opportunity to choose from among the two candidates. Seven mmerewatia casted lots and the majority selected one whom the queen and the Asonahene accepted. In all our homes, we have the abusupanyin and the aberewatia. Hence, the Asona family has the Asonahene as the abusuapanyin and the queen as the aberewatia. During succession, the queen works with the Asonahene. When the selection is made the Asonahene is the first person to receive him, he does his scrutiny on him to make sure there are no marks nor tattoos on his body. Even at first, the chief wasn't to be circumcised. No needle nor knife was supposed to touch the chief. The candidate goes through a set of interviews with the Asonahene who then forwards him to the queen and then recommends him. In this situation, the two candidates came but the queen didn't want it like that, she told them to do proper scrutiny and bring only one person if all these were done earlier, we wouldn't have had any conflict…"* (Field Data, 2021).

While clarifying how the current process went, a participant narrated that:

*"…The family selected one person and forwarded him to the queen who did same unto the Asona family. Before that, the 11 members of the Asona family will report to the Krontihene about the vacancy of the stool and the need to fill it. The Krontihene then forwards the news to the queen who will make the necessary process for the selection of a candidate. If she gets the candidate, she then presents the candidate to the Asona group who are the kingmakers. It is a tradition that they go through. When a person comes before the Asona family or the kingmakers they perform further examination on the person to ascertain if he is good enough. If he doesn't qualify or if he falls short of their criteria then the kingmakers can make a case to reject the candidates. However, you can say that the candidate is not qualified but you will have to prove it. In all, I can tell you that the queen has the power and authority to reject the allegations when there is no proof. The process can happen on three occasions where the kingmakers decide to reject the candidate. Even so the queen can decide to enstool the person that she wants this is because we have gotten to a stage where a chief from a different place can say he doesn't like the paramount chief. During the installation of the paramount chief, the prominent people in this process are the queen and the Asonahene. So, when the kingmakers are done with their process, they forward the candidate to a different group called Gyaasefo and Ankobeafo. People thought after the process is done by the kingmakers, they send the candidate to the Krontihene; that was how Nana Addo Dankwa's process was done and people made it a precedent. It is wrong. The chief is supposed to be introduced to some sub-chiefs (Ankobea and Gyaaase) where onward processes of slaughtering a sheep onto his feet is done. What has brought the conflicts in the family is that there couldn't agree on a common ground. The process as I have*

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*described started with the immediate past queen but she couldn't complete the process because of her death. The new queen started the original process of installing a chief but other process by the other group brought about the conflict. They are changing our traditions"* (Field Data, 2021).

The narrative expounded the processes engaged by one faction to the conflict. The participant's view indicated that key members in the process of installation are the queen and the Asonahene who are the head of the Asona family and the kingmakers. Thus, in installing the paramount chief, the queen has the power to select and or even reject a person as a candidate. This implies that the paramount queen in Akuapem possesses the authority to initiate and control the installation and enstoolment of a paramount chief. The narrative seems to argue that the installation and enstoolment process done by the queen was the right one. Meanwhile, other narratives opposed this view. A typical example included:

*"When the stool is vacant, the three royal houses have the mandate to occupy the throne respectively. This is same for the position of the paramount queen. Currently, the Sakyiabea royal gate has the mandate to occupy the throne. The moment the paramountcy becomes vacant, the Krontihene takes charge of all affairs of the state as the acting president of the traditional council. Hence, when there is a call for a paramount chief, the Krontihene is informed, who then informs the kingmakers and the family from which the paramount chief is supposed to hail from. The aberewatia upon receiving the information calls for a meeting with all the elderly women called mmeapanyin with whom she will choose the candidate who is deemed appropriate. However, this is not given to anybody in the family. Selection of a candidate is based on family generations. Hence, from the rightful generation, they elect one royal. This process is done by only the female royals who are called the "mmeapanyin" headed by the aberewatia. When a rightful candidate is chosen, the aberewatia informs the kingmakers (11 in number). The queen is involved at this stage. Therefore, the name is given to the queen, who calls on all the kingmakers to discuss and vet the selected candidate for the paramountcy position. Whether they accept the candidate or not, they report to the family"* (Field Data, 2021).

He further narrated that:

*"Meanwhile, the whole process of electing a new candidate will begin if they do not accept the first one. This can be done on three occasions, after which they turn to another family. Hence, if the candidate is accepted, he is sent to the Krontihene who organizes a mini durbar to receive him upon which he forwards him to the Banmuhene (who does all customary rites for the paramount chief). The Banmuhene parades the candidate through town, whiles engaging him in all the necessary customary rites. The candidate is then sent for confinement in the Banmuhene's palace. The Asona people who came here were of the same family so it is within that family that the chief is supposed to go for confinement; the Ankobeahene of Akuapem was the one who received the candidate to be confined in his palace. But during the succession of the immediate past, Chief Oseadeeyo Addo Dankwa III, there was a bit of an issue within this same Sakyiabea family and the absence of the Ankobeahene, he went into*

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*confinement at the Adumhene's palace which wasn't the ideal thing but situation caused that to happen. So, just like what we are experiencing now, the succession of the past chief had lots of conflicts, traditions were twisted a bit. Nonetheless, after confinement, he goes to choose a stool name. This is done before the Krontihene summons all the divisional chiefs to inform them about the candidate and the processes he has gone through"* (Field Data, 2021).

When asked how the process went, the participant said that:

*"At first, swearing in wasn't done on the very day he comes out of confinement but because of certain things like the COVID-19 and the conflict involved in the succession process we did it on the same day. Nonetheless, during the swearing in, he swears to all the divisional chiefs who in turn swears to him in a distinguished manner. This signifies that he is the paramount chief now. If not for the conflict and the COVID-19, this was supposed to be done as a big occasion where all the divisions and people from different places come to the ceremony. He rides in a palanquin through town. When he gets down, he is guided to swear in the middle of the whole gathering. The Okuapehene has lots of respects and power. He presides over all activities here. Two to three months later, the traditional council meets and this is where the acting president hands over all activities to him. This is how the paramountcy is arranged"* (Field Data, 2021).

The narrative is an indication of a divergent process used by a different group for their installation process. In this narrative, the participant expounded on the processes which they believed to be right for the installation of the paramount chief. It opposes the view that the queen has greater control over kingmaking process.

Both narratives seem to imply that contradictions and disagreement over the processes for the installation and enstoolment of a paramount chief in Akuapem Traditional Area is a causative agent for the conflict. The findings correspond with that of Anamzoya and Tonah (2012) in their study of Nanum chieftaincy dispute that chieftaincy conflict may result due to contestations over installation and enstoolment processes. Yet, both narratives agreed that there are processes involved in installation and thus, multiple but specific stakeholders are responsible for installing the paramount chief in Akuapem.

Meanwhile, it became apparent in the study that contestations over who performs what processes in enstoolment served as a root that affirmed the procedural struggles. Participants indicated that different traditional authorities were engaged in opposing factions' process of installation as against the specified stakeholders established by the Customary Law (Akuapem State) Order, 1960 (LI 32) for coherent kingmaking processes. This was confirmed by participants in a focus group discussion who indicated that;

*"Those who were selected went through various processes done by some traditional authorities and we all understand that these key players who did the processes did so for who they support. Ideally, all of them are supposed to agree to the candidate they think qualifies to be the paramount chief. However, since both factions went by*

*different processes it is a great question to ask if either of them did it right but, I learnt the abrewatia petitioned the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs"* (Field Data, 2021).

"*In Akuapem, every chief control a particular family or house who performs the traditional duties but because most of the Chiefs are not on the side of the newly installed chief, customs and traditions have been twisted by certain people who have no rights in performing those duties. Even when they were installing him, it was done*" (Field Data, 2021).

The comments indicated that specific rituals or customary practices are designated for particular individuals or families. They indicted that though specific rituals are meant for a particular individual or groups, other traditional stakeholders performed the specified roles. It can be inferred from the comment that challenges over who performed what roles contributed to the conflict. The divergent processes of enstoolment by the different actors of which some were seen not to have any right in performing the specified duties contributed to the chieftaincy conflict in Akuapem. This corresponds with the study of the Nanum chieftaincy dispute by Anamzoya and Tonah (2012) who indicated that the rituals and who to perform these rituals for installation and enstoolment is seen as a cause of conflict.  However, another participant argued that:

"*Circumstances causes traditions to change. During the succession of Oseadeeyo Addo Dankwa III, there was no Ankobeahene of Akuapem, he went into confinement at the Adumhene's palace which wasn't the ideal thing but situation made that to happen. So, just like what we are experiencing now, the succession of the past chief had lots of conflicts, traditions were compromised a bit"* (Field Data, 2021).

The participant indicated that certain situations can cause traditions to change. The comment indicated that the succession of the immediate past chief witnessed some changes in the traditions of the society with different traditional authorities taking charge of the processes due to some circumstances. Meanwhile, refusal to follow specific and laid down processes as identified in the study of Zongo conflict by Kuupiel (2021) is seen as a major cause of chieftaincy succession conflict.

Kingmaking, involves particular set of processes performed by specific stakeholders in the traditional area. The findings suggests that the traditional authorities who engaged in the divergent processes for the two candidates are supporters and sympathizers of either faction who may not necessarily be responsible for the processes. It was revealed that these factions would defend the processes and the individuals who undertook these processes. The dataset confirmed that disagreement between individuals or groups, as argued by Sulemana (2009), tend to result in conflict situations. Hence, the disagreement over the processes and stakeholders who undertook the process of installing the paramount chief in Akuapem seems to be justified as a cause for the conflict in the traditional area. The conflict, however, seemed intensified as parties accused each other for disrespecting traditional leaders, supportive of their faction as discussed in the next sub-section.

**Disrespect of traditional authorities and key stakeholders**

An important factor to the conflict that became apparent was factions' disrespect to key stakeholders of the traditional area, who were indicated to be supportive of opposing factions. Following the contestations of the processes and rightful individuals to perform the processes involved in the enstoolment of the paramount chief by the two factions, participants indicated that disrespect of traditional authorities who either faction believed are sympathizers or supporters of oppositions seem to have resulted in the conflict. Examples of the comments from participants included:

> *"The gross disrespect all over the place impacted this. Now people in this community insult anyone; they insult pastors, queens, kings and anyone they oppose. They handle these things with some measure of passion and if you don't take care, you will have their displeasure."* (Field Data, 2021).

> *"...some people have done what is wrong in the eyes of the society. The queen is the one who has the authority to enstool the king. This is the little title role she enjoys but the respect that was supposed to be given her has been trampled upon by some people in the society with the backing of political mechanisms. Disrespecting the queen is something that cannot be tolerated. She gave them all the chance to select the candidate for the position* (Field Data, 2021).

> *"If they saw the queen in her capacity to perform her duties without interference and respected her as such, there wouldn't be any conflict"* (Field Data, 2021).

> *"The kingmakers are eleven (11), we know they had a meeting to start the process again after they came back from court because that was what the court said. Only seven (7) members were present because four of them (4) shut their doors to the people that were sent to invite them to the meeting. I mean, it was disrespect to the other leaders because they waited for them and they didn't show up without giving any reasonable excuse. They also felt they had majority numbers so they could proceed with the process. Some harsh comments have been said by both groups against each other. The level of disrespect among even the leaders, I think the young ones have learned and now people are fighting each other because they feel disrespected…"* (Field Data, 2021).

The participants lamented that, disrespect has been the core issue in the conflict, indicating that certain traditional leaders have been victims of disrespect in different forms. One participant noted that the disrespect to these leaders have been a cause for the conflict. It was also expressed that there is some form of disrespect among the leaders which have transcended to the youth and thus causing conflict. Their comments seem to suggest that any form of disrespect that is exerted on leaders who are believed to be supportive of either faction or any other member of the faction, incur the wrath of the affected faction. A major implication here is that, members of a faction operate based on identity. Hence, disrespect of a member from an opposing faction may result in conflict.

The overall discussions on the causes of chieftaincy conflict in the Akuapem Traditional Area under the dynamics involved confirms that unresolved grievances give rise and exacerbates

conflicts (Gates et al., 2016). Succession conflicts have troubled societies since ancient times, and many prominent political thinkers have weighed in on the subject of how to regulate it Kokkonen & Sundell, 2017). Hence, identifying the factors that influence the problems is crucial to address the issues. The findings therefore confirmed reportage and discussions in media that the conflict in Akuapem Traditional Area is as a result of the succession to the paramountcy (Kwawukume, 2020; Ghanaian Times, 2020; Ghana Business News, 2018). It is argued that conflict is inevitable in the society (Ahorsu, 2007) and thus, may undermine social cohesion if not addressed (Obeng, 2015). Conflicts tend to have many different sources of tension located at multiple levels over time and thus, often interact to ignite and sustain it (Coleman, Vallacher, Nowak & Bui-Wrzosinska, 2007; Penu & Osei-Kufuor, 2016). The argument of Avis (2019) indicated that the contest for power and opportunities where one feels to be excluded creates conducive space for conflict. This is confirmed by the findings in the study that, the struggle for power is a key factor to the exacerbation of the conflict. It is argued here that dysfunctionality and great loss will be recorded in the traditional area when laid down processes and structural mechanisms are not in place for the functioning of the society (Elwell, 2015) and thus, divergent processes exist for the same activity. Further argument suggested that disrespect of authorities and key stakeholders believed to be supportive of either faction, would generate and heighten the degree, intensity and scale of the conflict (Lukenheimer, 2018). The findings suggests that the multiple but complicated factors of the conflict are key to its exacerbation in the traditional area.

Structural functionalism used to underpin the study underscores the collective or correlated means to which societal structures operate for the existence and functioning of society in its stable nature. Hence, the emergence and existence of conflicts within or among structures may disrupt the stability or equilibrium of the social system (Ewell, 2013). Hence, it focuses on the interrelatedness of structures in the society whose functions, together constitute the stability of the society (Britannica, 2020). Dwelling on Merton's approach of functionalism, the theory established that, dysfunctionalities of structures in the society cannot be overruled (Ewell, 2013). The dysfunctionalities of structures are developed from multiple sources that create tension in the structure and the society as a whole. He argued that dysfunctional elements or circumstances within structures fuels conflict which advertently, affects the stability of the society. The findings of the study identified succession conflict as a dysfunctionality in the institution and revealed certain factors that fuels the dysfunctionality within chieftaincy in the traditional area which seem to affect the stability of the structure and the society as a whole.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chieftaincy conflict in Akuapem is a contestation over the succession of a paramount chief in the traditional area. It is a tussle among the kingmakers of the paramount chief in the area. Multiple indications showed that the dynamics of the conflict involves the causes, which revolved around power struggle, contestation of succession processes, and the disrespect of traditional authorities and stakeholders. Chieftaincy succession in Akuapem particularly, one surrounding the paramountcy is a procedural activity where a royal ascends the Ofori Kuma stool. Certainly, refusal and non-adherence to the laid down procedures of installation and

enstoolment resulted in the dysfunctionality, as functionalists may put it. It is therefore recommended that the established procedures or processes for installing and enstooling the paramount chief in the traditional area should be strictly adhered to. This perhaps will ensure free and fair practices in the installation and enstoolment processes.

Again, information on relevant customs and traditions such as chieftaincy succession should generally be made available to all stakeholders in chieftaincy issues in the Akuapem Traditional Area. This is because, in the context of the narratives of community members on succession, the reality was that most people had different views and conceptions on installation and enstoolment of the paramount chief. Community members need to be aware of the information on the established and codified procedures for succession. This could address the contradictions of oral traditions on succession.

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