

# **Chieftaincy Conflicts and Women in Ghana**



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**Dedication**

To my beloved mother, Madam Felicia Owusu Sukah

### **Abstract**

Even though Ghana is generally considered as one of the most peaceful countries on the African continent, the country has its fair share of problems. Of the many interrelated problems facing Ghana in the last quarter of the turbulent century, is the menace of ethnic and communal conflicts. Chieftaincy which revolves around ethnicity is generally considered as one of the major source of conflict in Ghana. Chieftaincy institutions particularly in Northern Ghana is perceived as male institution. For women, this often implies continues marginalization, oppression and discrimination.

Despite the fact that Ghana has adopted policies aimed towards gender equality, the increased role of chieftaincy poses a challenge particularly on issues concerning chieftaincy conflict resolution. There has also been increased awareness globally on the impacts of conflicts on women and the contributions women can make in peace-building. The United Nations Resolution 1325 addresses the disproportionate effects of conflicts on women and the need for women to be involved in all conflict peace-building efforts especially at the grassroots levels. However, there are limited studies on how women are actually affected by chieftaincy conflicts and the role they can play in resolving chieftaincy conflicts. This is what the study is set out to investigate.

The study aims at addressing the role of chieftaincy in conflicts in Ghana. Primarily, the study is intended to promote women's involvement in peace-building at the grassroots level. The research project concentrates on Bawku East Municipality (BEM) as a Case Study. It draws on theories bordering on ethnicity, social conflict and gender perspectives.

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### **Lists of abbreviations**

ADF	African Development Fund
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BC	Bawku Chieftaincy
BCC	Bawku Chieftaincy Conflict
BE	Bawku East
BEM	Bawku East Municipality
BMA	Bawku Municipal Assembly
CCR	Chieftaincy Conflict Resolution
CI	Chieftaincy Institution
CPP	Convention People's Party
CWGB	Concerned Women Group of Bawku
DCE	District Chief Executive
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DVA	Domestic Violence Act
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FPI	Front Populaire Ivoiten
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIHOC	Ghana Industrial Holding Corporation
GoG	Government of Ghana
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service

HBP	High Blood Pressure
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IEPC	Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee
MA	Municipal Assembly
MCE	Municipal Chief Executive
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLC	National Liberation Council
NPP	Northern People's Party
NPP	New Patriotic Party
PDCI	Pari Democratique de Cote d'voire
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PSC	Protracted Social Conflict
RCC	Regional Co-ordinating Council
RDR	Rassemblement des Republicans
RHC	Regional House of Chiefs
RNHC	Regional and National House of Chiefs
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TA	Traditional Authority
TSS	Traumatic Stress Syndrome



UER	Upper East Region
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UP	United Party

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## **1.0 Introduction: Ghana - a peaceful place in Africa?**

Ghana is generally characterised as one of the most peaceful countries on the African continent. In fact, even the transition from military rule under Rawlings went smoothly and Ghana can now celebrate two decades of peaceful democracy. Compared to some other African countries, like Liberia, Kenya and Sierra Leone, where transfer of political power has been amongst the major causes for civil war, political power has in Ghana been handed over from an incumbent government to an opposition political party without interruption. Ghana ranks high also on the Global Peace Index Barometer on democratisation. It is among the few countries on the African continent where there have been regular free and fair elections. In addition, Ghana has served as a mouthpiece and guardian for peace in Africa, with involvement in peace mediation and peacekeeping. Moreover, democracy and commitment to peace seems to hold up, in spite also of economic dissatisfaction.

Considerable turmoil has, however, erupted in the past few years, which to some extent has been captured on the radar screen of world politics; Ghana is witnessing conflicts between various religious groups, rival football clubs, political parties and not the least various groups fighting over control of chieftaincy. Ethnicity is often regarded as a major source of conflicts in Africa. Chieftaincy is generally regarded as being a main institution in issues around ethnicity, and is seen as a major factor behind the present conflicts in Ghana. Tsikata and Seini (2004: 25) estimate that there are roughly about 100 chieftaincy conflicts currently on going in Ghana. While it seems like the institution has gained increased relevance in Ghana over the past decades, the institution of chieftaincy is, however, unclear and unspecified. What does it actually entail? Ethnicity and chieftaincy involve issues of group conflicts, but also land distribution, language, culture and religion. So what can explain these recent conflicts in Ghana?

The chieftaincy institution has traditionally been perceived as a male institution. Men occupy and inherit the roles as chiefs. To women, this often implies continuous discrimination and marginalisation. While Ghana has now assured equal rights for women and men, the increased role of chieftaincy hence brings challenges. At the same time, there is increased attention internationally to the role of women in conflicts and the contribution women can play in peace- building. The United Nations (UN) Resolution 1325<sup>1</sup> recognises that conflicts have a

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000 during Namibian presidency of the Security Council. Also, on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009, the Security Council adopted resolution 1889 (2009) which introduced twenty-six (26) indicators for monitoring implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

particular impact on women and calls for their increased participation in all conflict resolution processes at the grass root level. Yet, there is limited documented information from the field on how women are actually affected in conflicts and little information on whether and how women take part in peace-building and mediation efforts to prevent violent conflicts. This is what this study is set out to investigate.

My main objective is to help shed light on the role of chieftaincy in conflicts in Ghana using Bawku East Municipality (BEM) as case study. More importantly, I want to contribute to the increased academic efforts at shedding light on the role of women in peace-building efforts.

My focus is hence on:

- What explains chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana (BEM)?
- How are women affected by chieftaincy conflicts?
- How can women possibly help resolve chieftaincy conflict?

Whereas some studies have been done on the role of chieftaincy in conflicts in other parts of Ghana such as the Northern Region, Volta Region, Eastern Region and the Greater Accra Region, I will look particularly at BEM in the Upper East Region (UER) of Ghana. This is because we have relatively little information about the region. At the same time, the region is of utmost national importance for its contribution to economic and political development of Ghana. The region has political influence in Ghana's democracy. It comprises twelve (12) parliamentary constituencies and six (6) administrative districts<sup>2</sup>. The region can also boast of tourist sites such as the *Paga* crocodile pond and the Bolgatanga Museum, which earns the country substantial foreign income. The UER is also of particular interest because of its economic potentials. Furthermore, the region produces agricultural product like livestock and cereals, which are exported. The Tomato Canning Factory (GIHOC) at *Pwalugu* and the Meat Processing Factory (GIHOC) at *Zuarungu* are all of economic benefits to the country.

The conflict has led to the loss of lives and properties. Amnesty international Ghana section, reported on 23rd August 2008 that, ten (10) women were killed in the Bawku conflict. In the same month, the media station Modern Ghana reported of the death of Madam Adisa who had her throat slit. On Saturday 17, April 2009, the radio station Myjoyonline reported of the

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<sup>2</sup> Namely *Bongo, Bawku East, Bawku West, Bolgatanga, Builsa and Kassena-Nankana*.

death of a woman who was killed during curfew hours<sup>3</sup>. Women have also suffered horrendous violation of human rights, have lost their children, husbands, close relatives, friends, farm lands and animals, and now forms the greater majority of internally displaced population in *Salaga* and *Pusiga*, while others are refugees in neighboring countries of Togo and Burkina Faso<sup>4</sup>.

Achieving a better understanding of the conflicts in Ghana will contribute to closing the knowledge gap in the area of women and conflict resolution. In addition, it will assist vulnerable groups in an area of high political priority.

## 1.2 Problems in Ghana

The political landscape of Ghana has been relatively unstable since independence in 1957 until 1992 when multi-party democracy was restored. Since 1957 to present, ten (10) governments have ruled Ghana. Six (6) of which were democratically elected while four (4) were military regimes. However, the transition from military rule to civilian rule in 1992 was a very significant milestone in Ghanaian politics. The period thereafter has been relatively peaceful with stable political rule<sup>5</sup>, and altogether considerable economic progress (African Development Fund 2008:9, Gyimah-Boadi and Mensah 2003:5-19). This relative peace in Ghana according to the African Development Fund's Report can be attributed to : (i) the country's 1992 constitution, (ii) increasing independence of the judiciary, Electoral Commission and the Commission on Human Rights, (iii) the emergence of an active independent media and civil society and (iv) expression on the commitment to good governance and democracy (2008: 3).

Nevertheless, in spite of these developments in the internal political arena, and the efforts of the Rawlings, Kufuor and Mills administrations to increase women's participation in governance, women continue to be underrepresented in national decision-making. A report by the African Development Fund (ADF) in 2008 estimated the number of women representation in national parliament to be 10.8% (p: 27)<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Details of this can be found on [http://www.amnestyghana.org/newsdetails.asp?id=2039&cat\\_id=23](http://www.amnestyghana.org/newsdetails.asp?id=2039&cat_id=23), <http://news.peacefonline.com/news/201002/37597.php> and <http://www.modernghana.com/news/171255/1/two-injured-women-in-bawku-conflict-die.html>, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/270909/1/pregnant-woman-shot.html>, <http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/201004/44844.asp>, (Accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Ghanaview.com reported on 11 December 2001 that sixty people have been confirmed dead in the Bawku conflict and 2,500 displaced most of whom are women.

<sup>5</sup> Ghana has had free and fair elections from 1992 to 2008. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) was in power from 1992 to 2000 when it handed over power to the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which ruled from 2001 to 2008. In 2008 the NDC won the general elections again which brought the party back to power. This is a big impact towards effective democratization because the transfer of political power was among the major causes of civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

<sup>6</sup> More on women in political decision-making in Ghana can be read from the African Development Fund 2008:27.

In the international political arena also, Ghana has become a major political “player” in the region with focus on peace building and considerable involvement in peace mediation<sup>7</sup> in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire<sup>8</sup> and with contributions of troops to several peacekeeping operations around the world (Berdal and Economides 2007: 253-257, Tsikata and Seini 2004: 3f).

**Fig: 1.0 Ghanaian Regimes Since Independence**

<b>Regime</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Description</b>
Convention People’s Party (CPP)	Nkrumah	1951-1966	Ghana achieved full independence in 1957 and republican status in 1960. Regime overthrown in coup d’état
National Liberation Council Regime (NLC)	Ankrah	1966-1969	Coup d’état regime. Supervised elections in 1969 and handed over to constitutional government
Progress Party Regime	Busia	1969-1972	Second Republic. Overthrown in coup d’état
National Redemption Council (NRC)	Acheampong	1972-75	Military Regime. Composition of executive and name of ruling council changed two times after internal power struggles.
Supreme Military Council (SMC)	Acheampong Akuffo	1975-78 1978-79	Overthrown in a military uprising of young officers and other ranks
Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)	Rawlings	June to September 1979	Supervised elections and handed over to a constitutional government
Peoples National Party Regime (PNP)	Limann	1979-1981	Third Republic. Overthrown in a coup d’état
Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)	Rawlings	1982-1992	Coup d’état regime. Called elections and succeeded itself
National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Rawlings	1993-2000	Fourth Republic
New Patriotic Party (NPP)	Kuffour	2001 to 2008	Fourth Republic
National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Attah Mills	2009 to date	Fourth Republic

**Source: Tsikata and Seini 2004:20**

<sup>7</sup> The Global Peace Index ranks 144 countries in the world. The Peace index scores from 1 to 5, where 1 equals the most peaceful. Ghana scored 1.761 in the 2009 ranking and placed 52nd in the world and 4<sup>th</sup> most peaceful in Africa. (In 2008 Ghana was ranked the most peaceful country in Africa and 40<sup>th</sup> most peaceful in the world). See <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpi/results/ghana/2009/> accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2010

<sup>8</sup> The peace Agreement between the Government of Liberia (GOL), The Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), The Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and the political parties in Accra, Ghana on August 18<sup>th</sup> 2003 (<http://www.theperspective.org/theghanaagreement.html> accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010).

**Fig 1.1 Gender Profile of Core Decision-Making Positions in Ghana**

Office	Total	Male	Female	Percentage of female
Ministers	29	25	4	13.7
Deputy Ministers	38	29	9	23.7
Regional Ministers	10	10	0	0
Deputy Regional Ministers	10	6	4	40
Council of State	24	21	3	12.5
District Chief Executives	138	126	12	8.7
Parliament	230	205	25	10.9

**Source:** Abantu for Development (n.d.). List of MoS, MCoS, DCEs & MPs (Ghana Country Gender profile 2008:27)

The economic situation of Ghana has not also been stable since independence (African Development Fund 2008:9, Gyimah-Boadi and Mensah 2003:5-12). In fact it has been argued that Ghana was one of African's vibrant economies immediately after independence, depending on the export of precious minerals and agricultural products. The African Development Fund Report on Ghana in 2008 pointed out that this economic boom in the late 1950's and early 1960's was followed by economic decline in the 1970's as a result of policy short comings and the fall in the international prices of cocoa and gold (p: 9). The report further asserted that this economic decline was improved with the implementation of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) between 1983 and 1988. In the 1990's again, the report noted also that there was an economic decline from a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 5.2 percent in the 1980's to 4.5 percent. This situation was however improved in the 2000's as a result of increased export of cocoa, timber and gold, favorable international prices for these commodities and private remittance (ibid). Generally the Afrobarometer Round 2 survey in Ghana indicated that unemployment and informal sector employment is very high. The public sector is the main provider of employment (Gyimah-Boadi and Mensah 2003:5f).

Ghana has also witness conflicts of different types. There have been clashes between religious groups<sup>9</sup>, rival football clubs<sup>10</sup> and members of different political parties<sup>11</sup>. There have also been sporadic outbreaks of ethnic (intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic) and communal conflicts. Most of these communal and ethnic conflicts are fought between “minority” and “majority” ethnic groups. It must be pointed out here that the notion of “majority” and “minority” ethnic groups has nothing to do with demography; rather they are used to “connote ethnic groups that did not build kingdoms in the past” (Brukum 2007:99)<sup>12</sup>. These conflicts are disputes over chieftaincy, natural resources (land, minerals, pasture etc), and succession disputes<sup>13</sup>. These conflicts in Ghana are only found in a particular geographical location and are not spread to other regions. Conflicts still exists in Ghana because of succession rule, political interference, land issues, *destoolment/desenskinment*<sup>14</sup>, misuse of skin or stool revenue and property and the inability of the Regional and National House of Chiefs (RNHC) to resolve chieftaincy conflicts (Lund 2003:587, Atteh and Tonah 2007:156, Tsikata and Seini 2004:36, Brukum 2007:101,106, Gyimah-Boadi and Mensah 2003:41).

## 1.2 Background of the Chieftaincy Institution in Africa

Bayart (1993) argues that the concept of chieftaincy often leads to confusion, but in most cases, it simply refers to the position of power to which one accedes through individual political or economic power. Although the rotation of conflicts often comes about through chieftaincy, it brings together, he notes, dominant categories that were previously heterogeneous in the end. Chieftaincy in Africa is comparable to monarchical type of rule in Europe and some parts of Asia. It is the oldest political system in most African states. Dankwa argues that, chieftaincy “has emerged from the social fabric of the land..., it is nobody’s creation and therefore cannot be easily destroyed” (2004: 1).

<sup>9</sup> There have been conflicts between Muslims, between Christians and Muslims, and between Ga Traditionalist and Charismatic churches. Also, see Brobbey 2007:63-90 and also Tsikata and Seini 2004:24-25. In 1996, there was a religious clash between Kotokoli and Dagomba at Akim Oda Zongo. There have been other clashes at Kumasi, Wa and Tamale

<sup>10</sup> On 9<sup>th</sup> May 2001, Accra Hearst of Oaks and Kumasi Asante Kotoko football fans clashed at the Accra Sports Stadium resulting in a stampede, which left 126 fans dead.

<sup>11</sup> There were clashes between the supporters of the two major political parties NDC and NPP during the 2008 general election at Bawku Central, Tamale, Ho, Accra and other parts of the country leading to deaths and destruction of property. There were also violent clashes in *Gushiegu* District in the Northern Region between NPP and NDC supporters leading to the death of six people, and burning of houses and vehicles. See also <http://www.mrt-rrt.gov.au/docs/research/GHA/rr/GHA34660.pdf> (accessed on 25th November 2009) on 7th December 2000, in Bawku NPP supporters clashed with NDC supporters, similar violence had also been reported at Asutuare.

<sup>12</sup> In this instance, an ethnic group with less population occupying a geographical area with another ethnic group with many inhabitants can be called the majority group if the smaller ethnic group is built on a kingdom.

<sup>13</sup> Gonjas fought Nawuris and Nchumurus in 1991, 1992 and 1994, the Mossi fought in 2002, Andanis fought Abudus, Dagombas fought Konkombas, *Mamprusis* and *Kusasis* have fought for more than ten times between 1983- 2010, Gonjas attacked a Bator village in 1980, there have been the; Nkonya/Alavanyo, Peki/Tsito and Adaklu/Anyigbe conflicts in the Volta Region<sup>13</sup> (Tsikata and Seini 2004: 24-28, Brukum 2007: 98-99, Tonah 2007 and Bombade 2007).

<sup>14</sup> In Southern Ghana chiefs are enstooled and destooled because the chiefs there sit on stools, while in Northern Ghana, chiefs sit on skin of animals so chiefs there are enskinned and deskinning respectively.



Chieftaincy could be defined as an organized system of rule in the African traditional society with the chief as the symbolic head (or the first among equals). In most parts of Africa, the first person to have occupied a particular geographical area became chief<sup>15</sup> over the people who later inhabited that territory. These chiefs ruled based on the total consent of the people. The chief had a great deal of powers invested in him during the pre-colonial era. Braathen et al notes "...the authority of the traditional chief fused in a single person all elements of power: judicial, legislative, executive and administrative" (2000:6). However, during colonialism in Africa, and with the introduction of the indirect system of rule, the duties of the chiefs were reduced to cultural matters (Dankwa 2004: 6) because of the introduction of new political structures such as the civil service, local government ordinances and taxation.

Necessitate for communal living, the promotion of law and order, and protection from external aggression is among the major reasons for the establishment of chieftaincy in Africa. Dankwa has noted that "among many human societies, the paramount reasons for getting together are security and protection against external enemies or aggression, and the need to have a leadership that inspires and motivates" (2004:1). Chieftaincy in Africa is normally hereditary from a particular family or ethnic group. The body set aside to regulate the affairs of chieftaincy is called the *chieftaincy institution*. The main functions of the institution includes control of land, finance, trade both internal and external, defence, law and order, maintenance of peace among the people and their allies, and issues relating to social and cultural matters.

### **1.3 What do we know already about Women and Conflicts, and Chieftaincy Conflict?**

Several scholars have written extensively on women and conflicts. Stensrud and Husby (2005) examine the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the opportunities for an improved implementation of the Resolution. They found out that the involvement of women in political processes depends largely on the level and intensity of armed conflict. Their general conclusion was that resolution 1325 was not well founded at the grassroot levels even though there were differences in the level of awareness among these countries.

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<sup>15</sup> King

Gierycz (2001) focuses on the steps taken in the build-up to the Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing. She found out that gender issues have generally been equated to women. Gierycz argued that gender analyses should not only be linked to women's perspective but should be integrated with men's issues as well. She further recommended that future research should focus on how best to improve the gender difference hypothesis, how to take advantage of this difference in policy formulation and how best to ensure gender balance in decision-making and conflict resolution at all levels. Padarath (1998) examine the extraordinary power, strength, endurance and sexual brutalization of women by opposing political forces in KwaZulu/Natal. She concluded that the government of South Africa is struggling to reconcile issues of human rights abuses with nation building, forgiveness, women's human rights issues and reconciliation. However, Padarath stressed that the attainment of gender equality issues will demand ideological and individual evolution.

De Abreu (1998) analyses the situation and testimonies of women in the Mozambique armed conflict, and the preventive and supportive measures to help women and victims of rape. She found out that conflicts have long-term effects on women even when peace is restored. She therefore advocated that there should be an improvement in ways of addressing the problems of women in the aftermath of conflict and the need to address these issues in a gender perspective. Bouta and Frerks (2002) examine women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. They concluded that women must not only be seen as passive victims of armed conflicts but capable actors as well.

Turshen and Twagiramariya (1998) examine victims of rape in the Rwandan civil war and the plight of women in the aftermath of war. They found out that the conflict has created female-headed house thus giving women extra responsibilities. Turshen and Twagiramariya further suggested that women should come together and form associations to promote peace and unity in Rwanda. Samuel (2001) analyses the paradoxes and complexities that characterize women's involvement in conflict resolution using the case of Sri Lanka. She found out that Sri Lankan women are in a contradictory position in society. On one hand the protracted nature of the conflict and the death of men have lead to an increase in the number of female-headed household. On the other hand, she argued that the traditional roles of women as wives and mothers are still held with high esteem in Sri Lankan society. She concluded that even though there has been a female president in Sri Lanka, there has not been any significant increase in the number of women in politics.

Tonah (2007) writes exhaustively on chieftaincy succession disputes in the *Wungu* province of *Mamprugu* of Northern Ghana and the conflicts that followed. He concluded that even though there have been attempts by various governments of Ghana to limit the role and power of chiefs; the institution of chieftaincy is still held with high esteem even at present. Brukum (2007) focuses on conflicts between indigenous people and the recent settler groups in the Northern Region of Ghana. He concluded among other things that while chieftaincy is at the root of the conflicts, the colonial government is also to be held responsible for the conflicts. Lund (2003) analyses the longstanding ethno-political conflict between *Kusasis* and *Mamprusis* in Bawku in northeast Ghana and asserts that ethnicity has become politicised, which has also made it more difficult to solve the conflicts. He therefore concluded that there is little indication that the government will prove capable of resolving the Bawku crisis.

Atteh and Tonah (2007) examine chieftaincy institutions, the causes and effects of the conflicts among the Ga of Greater Accra in general and the nature of chieftaincy in Bortianor in particular. They concluded that among other things, intervention by the government in the conflict could help resolve the conflict. This can be effective when the government organize periodic workshops for chiefs and elders to give them insight on democratic dispensation in Ghana. This view however seems to disagree with that of Lund who argued that government involvement in chieftaincy issues will not resolve conflicts but rather escalate it. Bofo-Arthur (2002) examines the twists and turns in government-chieftaincy relations and the impact of the 1992 constitution on the place and role of chieftaincy institution in Ghana. He found out that chieftaincy institutions in Ghana are central to the administration of the country especially at the local level; therefore, it cannot be done away with.

While these scholarly contributions have contributed with clarifications and understanding about women and conflicts and the role and content of the chieftaincy as an institution. None of them touches on the impact of chieftaincy conflicts on women and the contribution women can make in the resolution of chieftaincy conflicts in the BEM. This is the knowledge gap that the study seeks to fill. The UN and other International and Regional bodies recognise equal rights and status for women and men as a justifiable goal to pursue globally, hence involving women in conflict prevention, resolution, management and peace-building at all levels. However the pace and efficiency to pursue this goal varies according to the cultural setting and worldview of the society which the women find themselves.<sup>16</sup> The Concerned

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<sup>16</sup> Religion, culture and ideologies of a group of people or societies affect the extent to which women are involved in finding solutions to conflicts.

Women's Group of Bawku (CWGB), which is a neutral group made up of both *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* women, is playing a pivotal role to find solution to the Bawku Chieftaincy Conflict (BCC) and bring peace between the *Kusasis* and the *Mamprusis* as we will see later.

#### **1.4 Methodological Issues, Relevance and Challenges of the Study**

The reliability and validity of information for the study demands that both primary and secondary sources of data are used. The primary sources of information is mainly based on an in-depth interview conducted among key politicians and Assemblymen, focused grouped discussion with a key women organization CWGB, interviews with ordinary women in the municipality and participant observation. My respondents were *Kusasis*, *Mamprusis* and neutrals living in BEM. The study is based on, two months of intensive fieldwork carried out at BEM.

The phrase qualitative methodology<sup>17</sup> according to Taylor and Bogdan refers in the broadest sense to “research that produces descriptive data: people’s own written or spoken words and observable behaviour” (1984: 5). My choice to use qualitative methodology in this study is based on the fact that, the issues in the conflict are very complex, dynamic, on-going and involves many actors and factions who have different colours of opinions and ideas about the origin of the conflict, its future, its impacts on the livelihood of women and what women are doing to help resolve the conflict. In addition, I do not have quantitative data and which would be costly. The study seeks to get a wide range of comprehensive understanding of the entire situation in BEM, also to explore grey areas of research, and to find explanations to complex phenomenon and questions that can easily be dealt with by qualitative method.

While there are other chieftaincy conflict disputes in Ghana, such as the *Mossi* chieftaincy conflict, the *Dagbon* chieftaincy conflict and the *Angloga* conflict in the Volta Region, the case of BEM is an exception because these two groups, the *Kusasis* and *Mamprusis* used to live together in peace. As Rattray noted “...we *Kusasi*, also play together (*dem taba*) with *Mamprusi* and the *Grurense* because these tribes intermarry with us, and we have never sold each other, but the *Moshe* we never play with for we used to sell them for food” (1932: 390). Bawku, which was once an area for trade and commerce and producing cash crops on large

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<sup>17</sup> Qualitative methodology is used interchangeably with qualitative research in this study.

scale for foreign exchange has now been a scene of constant chaos and protracted conflicts for decades leading to extreme poverty. The BCC with its related effects is one of the longest conflicts in Ghana.

Internationally, the conflict has brought bad reputation to the country, as many foreign investors feel reluctant to invest in the country. Internally it has raised security concerns and division among the people, as the conflict is most often politicised. It has slow down business resulting in a rise in rural-urban migration with its related effects on the host cities. The conflict has also had severe effects on the finances of the Bawku Municipal Assembly (BMA), as the assembly has to provide for the security personnel who are on the ground for peacekeeping. The municipality cannot also have an effective system of taxation due to the instability in the area. It has also lead to low standard of education and has brought grief; lasting pain and a spirit of unforgiveness as so many people have lost family members because of the conflict.

In addition, the chieftaincy conflict in recent years has taken on new colours and has become more violent. Women have now become a main target of murder<sup>18</sup>. They suffer gross violations of their human rights; hundreds of them are now widows, single mothers and form the majority of internally displaced population in the country and refugees in neighbouring countries. Yet it is an area where women who have a minimal role to play in the institution of the Bawku chieftaincy<sup>19</sup> have organized under the CWGB to help resolve the conflict and bring peace to the area. Hence, the BEM is the most appropriate area in Ghana to research on the sources of chieftaincy conflict, the effects of conflict on women and the role women can play in resolution of conflict. The Bawku conflict has had negative impact on women and may be resolved if women are incorporated into the peace-building processes.

As a means of collecting data, open-ended questionnaires were administrated to a random sample population where a woman in every 12<sup>th</sup> household was selected. Forty-five (45) questionnaires were administrated in the proportion of twenty (20) *Kusasi* women, twenty (20) *Mamprusi* women and five (5) neutral women who are neither *Kusasi* nor *Mamprusi* residing in the municipality. Questions were translated from English to local language.

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<sup>18</sup> Women until recently were not targets of the conflict (Source: fieldwork 2009). This may be the case because women are easy targets.

<sup>19</sup> Compared to the Akan speaking areas in Southern Ghana where the queen mother plays a very pivotal role in the institution of chieftaincy and in fact, there has been female chiefs.

To get a better understanding about the conflict and the role women can play to resolve the conflict; in-depth interviews (one-to-one interviews) were conducted among key figures in the municipality. Semi-structured interviewing was used<sup>20</sup>; the research guide was flexible and changed with cropping events as probing questions were asked as the interview progress.

A focus group discussion with the CWGB was also part of my fieldwork, this brought women both *Mamprusis* and *Kusasis* together and each shares their experiences in the conflict in free-flowing and open-ended discussions and interactions. I was interested in asking the women to describe their role in the community, in the institution of the Bawku chieftaincy, the degree of the impact of the chieftaincy conflict on their livelihood, and the role they can play to resolve the conflict. The focus group interaction lasted for two hours.

Participant observation according to Taylor and Bogdan refers to “research that involves social interaction between the researcher and the informants in the milieu of the later, during which data are systematically and unobtrusively collected” (1984: 15). I was interested in observing at firsthand, the daily activities of the women, their ways of life, their relations with male counterparts, their health, ratio of boy-girl enrolment in schools, settlement pattern, their main sources of income and how the conflict has affected them physically. I took key interest in observing women groups at social gatherings, how those women interacted with others from another ethnic group, and the destructive effects of the conflict on social infrastructure. This helped me to understand better the conflict situation in Bawku and the gender relationship in a patriarchal society<sup>21</sup>. In fine, being a participant observer helped me to collect additional data that I would not have obtained through the other techniques.

In addition to the primary sources of information, secondary sources of information were relevant to the study. These include books, magazines, journals, newspapers, unpublished articles, internet sources and legal sources such as a report of the committee appointed by the Governor-General to investigate into the Bawku conflict. The use of both primary and secondary sources of information in the study was meant to complement and strengthen each other’s weakness and fill in gaps that each might have.

Informed consent and confidentiality of the participants was highly adhered to during the research. As Punch (1994) notes “research ethnics revolve around various issues of harm,

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<sup>20</sup> In order to avoid that the researcher take for granted common sense assumptions and understandings of others share (Taylor and Bogdan 1984:96).

<sup>21</sup> This is because I come from a matrilineal society.

consent, privacy and confidentiality of data” (quoted in Berg 2007: 53). I sorted for the needs and concerns of the population under study. I took time to inform each participant about the purpose of the research. The respondents were assured that the interviews were conducted for purely academic purpose, and participation was voluntary. Those participants who have been named in this study have all consented to it. Participants were also assured, that feedback resulting from the study would be made available to them in due time.

Data analysis is an ongoing process in qualitative research. Due to the voluminous data generated, there is always a risk in data processing that I may loss more information. There may also be a risk in translation as I shortened long conversations and reinterpreted it in my own words as, for or against a particular argument. However, I have done my utmost to prevent this. The possible loss of information in translations have been cross-checked numerous times and cross-checked against other sources of information.

### ***Problems, Challenges and Possible Limitations of the Study***

I encountered many challenges in conducting the research for the study. Due to the language barrier and the way of life between the southern part of Ghana where I have always lived and the northern part where I was conducting the research, it was very difficult to acclimatize to the population and build trust with them. Also seeking accommodation outside the study area and the curfew that was imposed during the study period may have adverse effect on the study, especially on the researcher role as a participant observer.<sup>22</sup> Having a research assistant as an interpretator in one way or another may affect the study, as I could not get at firsthand what the respondents were trying to put across. Translating from the local language to English may change the original meaning of words. My interaction with military personnels and resemblance to my junior brother who had been serving as a peacekeeper in the area may also affect the study.

There was a challenge in administrating questionnaires as most of the population under study thought I was an employee of one of the media station, trying to get information to publish. As a result many respondents refused to participate, and those who did, it was difficult to convince them even though I had an introductory letter from the University of Oslo. I also had problems interviewing all the key figures concerning the study. Although, I made contact with

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<sup>22</sup> Getting access to the study area upon my arrival in the Upper East Region was problematic because of the government imposed curfew at the time; hence I had to seek accommodation in Bolgatanga, the Capital of the Upper East Region which is about 2 drive hours from the study area.

key figures before embarking on the actual research in the study area, unnecessary bureaucracy could not allow me to have an in-depth interview with all the respondents I had wanted to interview. I could not also interview individually most member of the CWGB, because as part of the ethical code of the association, members are not allowed to talk to people such as researchers individually, they can only do that as a group<sup>23</sup>. Some of the women that I was interested in had also left BEM to other areas they see safe or were dead.<sup>24</sup> With this risk in mind, I made sure to give extra time to explain the purpose and background of the study.

### ***Relevance of the study***

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security was unanimously adopted during Namibian presidency of the Security Council on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000. The resolution recognizes the violation of the rights of women in conflicts zones and advocates for the active participation of women in all levels of conflict resolution at the grassroot level. Also on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009, the Security Council adopted resolution 1889 (2009) that introduced twenty-six (26) indicators for monitoring implementation of UNSCR 1325.

A lot has been written about women in Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other parts of the world who were affected by conflict in their societies and how these women in recent times have been involved actively in conflict resolution and peace-building processes<sup>25</sup>, but very little has been written about the impact of chieftaincy conflict on women in BEM and a work- in- process of what these women are doing with regard to UNSCR 1325 and 1889 to resolve the conflict that has ravage their municipality for decades. The CWGB, for some time now, have been continually involved in resolving the BCC. This may be as a result of failure on the part of successive governments, the security agencies, the clergy and other religious bodies, the RNHC, the National Peace Council and Non-governmental organisations to find a lasting and stable solution to the BCC (Brukum 2007:113f).

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<sup>23</sup> I could interview only the executives of the CWGB

<sup>24</sup> Madam Hawa Yakubu, a former MP of Bawku Central, Minister of Tourism in 2001-2002, and Ghana's representative to ECOWAS Parliament was dead.

<sup>25</sup> Sierra Leone was one of the first beneficiaries of the peace building commissions fund and women are now actively involved in politics and peace processes.



From the above information, I may not be wrong to say that the BCC has reached a stage where the active participation of women is very important if stable peace could be secured. It is my aim to bring awareness to the impact of the BCC on women and how resolution 1325 may be interpreted and integrated into the case of women in the BEM. I am hopeful that, many future writers on Chieftaincy Conflict Resolution (CCR) in Africa will focus on the impact of chieftaincy conflicts on women and the role of women in conflict resolution. I focus on women because generally it is their voices that are most often ignored in a society like Bawku where patriarchy is intrinsic to social living and legitimize by customs and traditions.

### **1.5 Women and Conflict: How Women are Affected by Conflicts**

Conflicts impacts negatively on local population. For instance men have been victims of rape and sexual assaults just as women have (Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998:10). According to Byrne 1996 ‘‘men of combat age are most often the ones who are conscripted and therefore killed during battle’’ (quoted in El Jack 2003:13). Men who are generally perceived as perpetrators are the main targets of murder in most conflict areas. It has also been argued that the increasing number of female-headed households in conflict zones is a testimony of how vulnerable men are in conflict situations.

When social infrastructures such as hospitals and schools are destroyed by conflicts men are also affected as anyone else in the community. Nevertheless, it seems that conflicts affect women in Africa differently than men due to patriarchy. This point is supported by Skjelsbæk who noted that ‘‘... , women’s experiences in war are determined by the gender cultural in which they lived and by the nature of the conflict’’ (2001:64). Also Major General Patrick Cmmaert: Former Deputy Force Commander to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is noted to have said ‘‘it is more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in Eastern DRC’’<sup>26</sup>. This above observations proves how vulnerable women are in conflict situations.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) stated that ‘‘despite their civilian status, women have increasingly become specific targets of attack and sexual violence as a method of waging war in order to destroy communities and families’’ (2005:1). A UN report also noted that

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<sup>26</sup> [http://www.unifem.org/attachments/events/WiltonParkConference\\_SummaryReport\\_200805\\_1.pdf](http://www.unifem.org/attachments/events/WiltonParkConference_SummaryReport_200805_1.pdf) accessed on 2nd December 2009

“women tend to be responsible for the care and nature of the family and thus shoulder heavy burdens. Collection of firewood or water often puts women at risk of danger, which include kidnapping, sexual abuse and exposure to landmines..., families also often wrongly assumed that women with children will be safe from harm and have left them behind as the rest of the family flees”(2002:14).

Women have been killed in conflicts and are targeted as prime victims of rape. Women constitute majority of international refugees and internally displaced person (Skjelsbæk and Smith 2001:4f). Byrne, also noted that “... , women are the main victims of war. This is either directly as fatalities or indirectly through the breakdown of family and community structures” (quoted in El Jack 2003:13). The UN report further stated that

“while women endure the same trauma as the rest of the population...bombings, famines, epidemics, mass executions, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, forced migration, ethnic cleansing, threats and intimidation; they are also targets of specific forms of violence and abuses including sexual violence and exploitation” (2002:ix).

The Beijing Platform also pointed out that, women are in particularly affected by conflict because of their status in society and sex (UN 2002:2). Women are generally viewed as bears of central identity and prime targets hence gender-based and sexual violence have increasingly become weapons of warfare and one of the defining characteristics of armed conflict (UN 2002:2). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also asserted that

“the fact that generally, women do not go off to fight and largely remain unarmed and unprotected at a time when traditional forms of moral, community and institutional safeguard have disintegrated, and weapons have proliferated, leads to women being particular vulnerable during wartime” (UN 2002:14).

Feminist researcher seeking to find out why more women than men are raped in conflict zone points out that

“rape is committed to boost the soldiers’ morale; to feed soldiers’ hatred for the enemy, their sense of superiority, and to keep them fighting; rape is one kind of war booty; women are raped because war intensifies men’s sense of entitlement, superiority, avidity, and social licence to rape; rape is a weapon of war used to spread political terror; rape can destabilize a society and break its resistance; rape is a form of torture;

gang rapes in public terrorize and humiliate women, rape is used to terrorize and silence women and force them to flee homes, families and communities; rape targets women because they keep the civilian population functioning and are essential to its physical and social continuity...”(Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998:11).

The above information illustrates that women in particular are affected greatly by conflict than men; therefore women should have a particular role to play in peace-building.

### **1.6 Why Women should be Involved in Conflict Resolution**

There is an ongoing debate among scholars on the involvement of women in conflict resolution and political decision-making. It has been argued whether the participation of women in conflict resolution will make any difference. Or whether the empowerment of women in political decision-making and conflict resolution will contribute to a more peaceful world (Skjelsbæk and Smith 2001:104). Salla has argued that

“... , women are less likely than men to adopt decisions that leads to the organized use of force in resolving domestic and international conflict. It is also suggested that, primarily as a result of socialization, women are peace-oriented while men are war-oriented” (2001:68).

From the above point raised by Salla, it can be inferred that women through the process of socialization may view security in terms of health, shelter, food etc, while men may turn to identify security in terms of heroism. Others have also reject the view that women are more peace-oriented, arguing that women just as men can be violent or peaceful based on the character of the individual involved (Salla 2001:75-78). According to Turshen

“... , women also perpetrate violence... , women practiced institutionalized violence, inflicting torture on imprisoned women, even pumping water into women’s fallopian tubes and administering electric shocks to women’s nipples, ... , African women have been caught up in township violence between rival political parties” (1998:10).

The above argument posed by these scholars indicates that either men or women can be considered entirely peaceful or war-oriented. It depends on the individuals and the situations where they find themselves. Nevertheless, the crucial question to be addressed here is why women should be involved in political decision-making and conflict resolution. The United Nations notes;

“Efforts to resolve conflicts and address their root causes will not succeed unless we empower all those who have suffered from them, including especially women. And only

if women play a full and equal part can we build the foundation for enduring peace, development, good governance, human rights and justice” (2002:ix).

As may be deduce from above, women form the critical masses, consequently including women in political decision-making and conflict resolution processes should be seen as a way of allowing women have a say in situations that affect their lives. According to Dahlerup, “If women do not have equal representation, that must show that barriers exist which block women’s route to power” (2001:105). In fine, including women in political decision-making and conflict resolution processes should be seen as a matter of justice. As has been noted by the United Nations (1993:8) in *The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women*

“Peace includes not only the absence of war, violence and hostilities...but also the enjoyment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedom within society...Peace is promoted by equality of sexes, economic equality and the universal enjoyment of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Its enjoyment by all requires that women be enabled to exercise their right to participate on an equal footing with men in all spheres of political, economic and social life of their countries, particularly in the decision-making processes, while exercising their right to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association in the promotion of international peace and cooperation” (quoted in Skjelsbæk and Smith 2001:15).

Another reason why women should be involved in conflict resolution is based on differences in value between men and women. The argument raised here is that men and women have different values because of their different positions in the society. Women are seen as being confined to the private spheres of life so engaging women in conflict resolution processes is a means “ towards representing the experiences and values of women” (Dahlerup 2001:105). Inferring from the argument raised above by Dahlerup, it will not be wrong for me to argue that the repression of women in society may prompt them to approach conflict resolution with fairness, respect for difference and human right perspective. This may result in a win-win approach to conflict resolution.

### **1.7 Thesis Outline**

The study is divided into five chapters. Each of these chapters is further divided into themes. In order to understand better the problems in focus, I first give a brief overview of the situation in Ghana in chapter one. The chapter also spans the chieftaincy institution in Africa. Methodological issues, relevance and problems of the study are also tackled. The last aspect of the chapter gives a discussion on women and conflict and why women should be involved in conflict resolution. In order to understand the conflict in focus better, I will give a brief synopsis of the conditions in Bawku in chapter two. This will encompass the ethnic composition, economic characteristics, political structures and religious affiliation of the study area.

Chapter three of the study will deal with chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana with particular reference to the Bawku chieftaincy conflict and the sources of chieftaincy conflicts in BEM. Chapter four of my research project will focus on women and conflict resolution using the case of the CWGB. The chapter is divided into many themes, but basically the chapter will look at the effects of conflicts on women and how women can possibly help to resolve conflicts. The final chapter is divided into two sections. The first sections will discuss the future prospects of peace-building in BEM. The second section will deal with a summary of what lessons have been learnt from the study.

### **1.8 Conclusion**

The chapter above gives indications that Ghana can generally be classified as one of the most peaceful countries on the African continent. However, Ghana has its fair share of ethnic and communal conflicts that has been going on for decades. The chapter found that chieftaincy which is generally regarded as being a main institution in issues around ethnicity has been the cause of most of these conflicts in Ghana. It was also discovered that chieftaincy which have traditionally been seen as a male institution marginalize and discriminate women in decision-making. With Ghana's adoption of equal rights for men and women and with UN Resolution 1325 coming to force in 2000, the chapter argued that women should be expected to have a greater role in decision-making and peace-building processes.

The chapter discussed methodological problem, however, it was concluded that these problems have not affected the study in any significant way. The last section of the chapter gave indications that men and women are affected differently in conflict zones, and that increased role of women in conflict resolution may lead to a peaceful world.

## 2.0 The Bawku East Area in Ghana

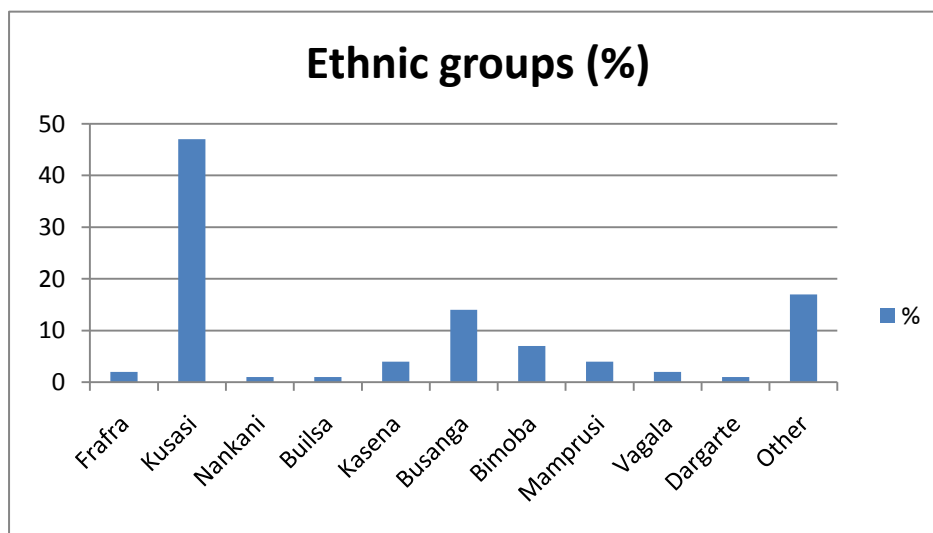
### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter throws more light on the geographic, demographic, and economic characteristics, and political structures of the study area. The figures quoted in the chapter are based on the 2000 Population and Housing Census for the UER. The reason is to give insight and make readers acclimatize to the general condition of the area under study.

### 2.2 Profile of the Bawku East Municipality

Bawku East Municipality (BEM) is located in the UER of Ghana. The municipality borders Burkina Faso to the North and Togo to the East, and with approximately 300,000 inhabitants, it is one of the most densely populated areas in Ghana<sup>27</sup>. BEM is a patriarchal society with about 87 percent households headed by men. Like all other municipalities in Ghana, Bawku East is made up of heterogeneous ethnic groups. The 2000 Population and Housing Census estimated some 47.6 percent *Kusasis* and 3.7 percent *Mamprusis* ethnic groups in BE.<sup>28</sup>

**Fig: 2.0 Ethnic Compositions in Bawku East**



**Source:** 2000 Population and Housing Census

<sup>27</sup> Population density of 147 persons per square km.

<sup>28</sup> Other ethnic groups in the area include: *Frafra* (1.6 percent), *Nankani* (0.1 percent), *Builsa* (1.1 percent), *Kasena* (0.4 percent), *Vagala* (2.1 percent), *Dargarte* (0.8 percent), *Busanga* (15.4 percent), *Bimoba* (8.3 percent) and others 18.9 percent (mostly non-Ghanaians)

The illustration above may seem surprising. How can *Mamprusis* who constitute less than 4 percent of the population in Bawku East be in conflict with *Kusasis* with a population of close to 50 percent? The reality of the case is that, even though the *Mamprusis* are the minority in terms of population, throughout history they were centralized and well organized under chiefs and enjoyed the support of the colonialist. This made them very powerful as they conquered other ethnic groups and imposed their system of rule on them. The *Mamprusis* ruled the Bawku area from *Nalerigu*<sup>29</sup> as an extra-territory (refer to page: 15).

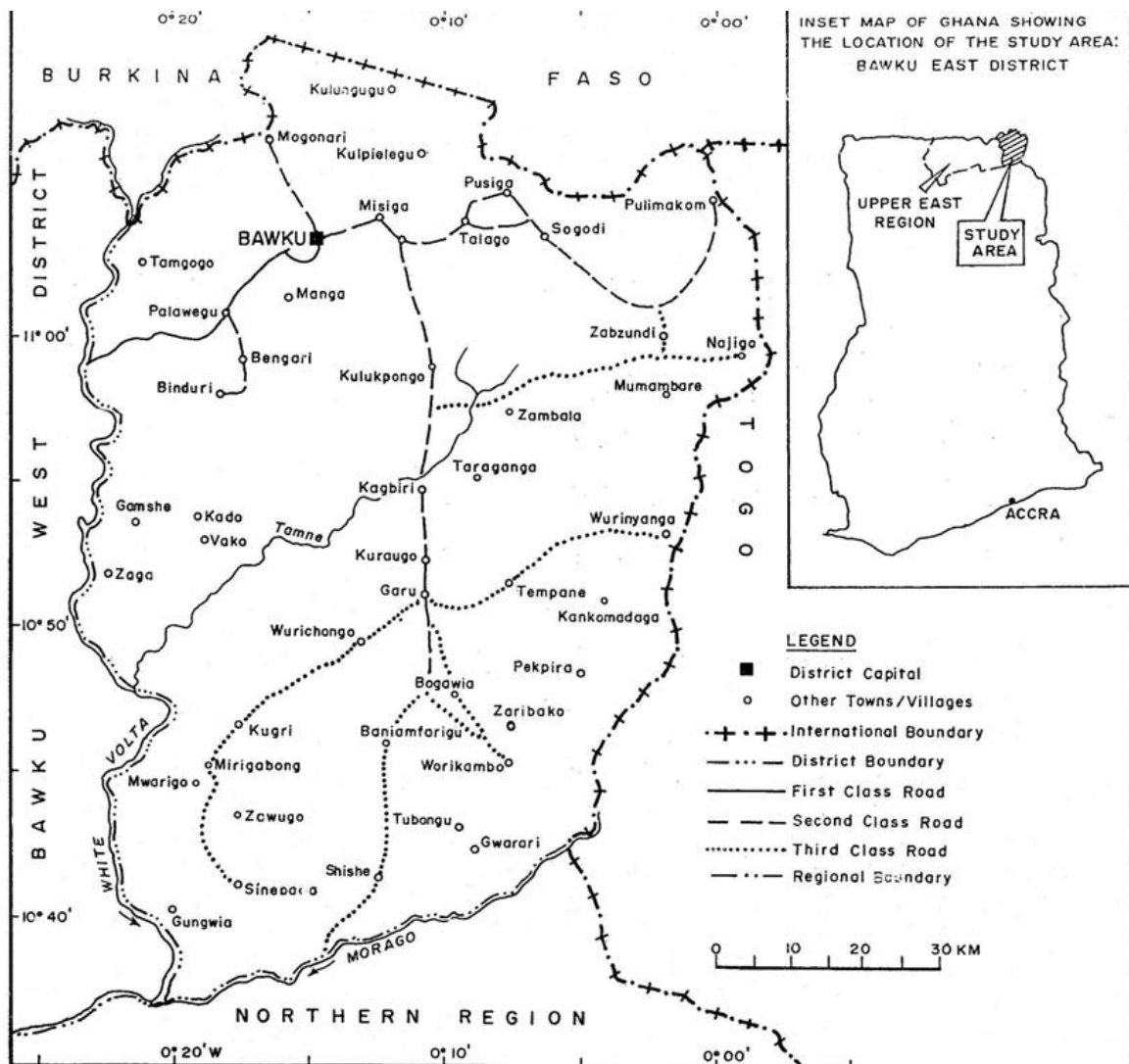
Until 1957, all *Kusasi* chiefs were elected by the paramount chief of the *Mamprusi* people (*Nayiri* of *Nalerigu*) and brought to the Bawku area to rule on his behalf. In actual sense, the chiefs of Bawku during those periods only had delegated power given to him by the *Nayiri*. This partly explains why *Mamprusis* form the minority in terms of number. Furthermore, a sizable number of *Mamprusis* are in Togo and southern parts of Burkina Faso, so violence can be engineered beyond the borders of Ghana<sup>30</sup>. The *Mamprusis* today are located in the central district of the municipality where it may be easier to gain control while the *Kusasis* are spread across the town (in the outskirts of the town). To add to the above, in recent times others ethnic groups have formed alliances with either *Kusasis* or *Mamprusis* as a basis for struggle over resources. In fine, although the *Mamprusis* are in minority in numbers, the situation on ground is more complex than what the table could tell.

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<sup>29</sup> This was where the paramount chief of the Mamprusis lived. It was also a place where chiefs were installed to rule Bawku.

<sup>30</sup> On Thursday November 26th 2009, two Ghanaians who reside in Bawku were beaten to death by residents of Burkina Faso. (<http://news.peacefonline.com/features/200911/33070.php>, assessed 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010)

**Fig: 2.1 Bawku East Municipality**



**Source:** Bawku East Town and country planning unit 2004

### 2.3 Economic Characteristics

The labour force in BEM consists of economically active and economically inactive population<sup>31</sup>. The economically active population is approximately 68 percent of the total working population. The other 32 percent are unemployed or disabled persons. The main economic activities of the people are agriculture, hunting and forestry, but most of the economically active population is engaged in agriculture. The main produce are; millet, guinea-corn, maize, groundnut, beans, sorghum and in the dry season tomatoes and onions.

<sup>31</sup> The labor force are those people who are of 15 years and above. The percentage doesn't take in to account persons who are below 15 years.



The main livestock include cattle, sheep, goats and poultry production (Population and Housing Census 2000:57-68).

Commerce is also an important economic activity in BEM. The geographical location of the area has made this possible, as it is easy to trade internally to the south in big cities and externally to Togo and Burkina Faso. Traders from Bawku sell their livestock; poultry and other farm produce to traders from southern Ghana, especially during the market days, which fall on every third day. While traders from Bawku also travel to Accra, Kumasi, Techiman and Tamale to buy furniture, building materials etc. BE tops all the other districts in wholesale and retail trade with 11.6 percent of its inhabitants engaging in such trade, followed by Bolgatanga with 10.8 percent.<sup>32</sup>

A section of inhabitants in BEM are also self employed with brewing of *Tito* (a local alcoholic drink), shea butter extraction, shoe, sandals and dress making, groundnut extraction and others as a major economic activity, which provides the individuals and their families with a major source of income.

## **2.4 Political structures**

The UER is administrated politically from the capital Bolgatanga. The main administrative structure at the regional level is the Regional Co-ordinating Council (RCC) headed by the Regional Minister who is a political appointee. Other members of the RCC are representatives from each district assembly, regional heads of decentralized ministries and representatives of the Regional House of Chiefs (RHC), (2000 Housing and Population Census: 6).

BEM has two major levels of political authority: the Municipal Assembly (MA) and the Traditional Authority (TA). The MA is the highest administrative and legislative body in the municipality. The MA has a membership of forty-eight (48). Two-thirds of the members are directly elected while the Central Government appoints the other one-third. The Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) is nominated by the president and approved by a two-thirds majority of the MA members present and voting. The MA passes by-laws, approves development projects, plans and budgets. The Executive Committee (EC), which falls under the MA, is headed by the MCE. It is made up of sixteen (16) members. The main functions of the EC

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<sup>32</sup> 2000 population and Housing census; 8: 57.

include development planning, justice and security, education, food and agriculture and provision of social services.

The chieftaincy institution symbolizes the Traditional Authority (TA). The Bawku Traditional Council (BTC) chaired by the paramount chief of the Bawku Traditional Area (BTA) represents the TA. Membership includes sub-chiefs and the council of elders (advisors of the *Bawku-Naba*)<sup>33</sup>. The TA plays a very important role to maintain the tradition and culture of the people, preserve peace, law and order, allocate land for development projects, acts as the ceremonial head and settle disputes among the people<sup>34</sup>. The TA and the native courts is very important conflict avenue for resolving conflicts at the local level (Gyimah-Boadi and Mensah 2003:41). The *Kusasi* and the *Mamprusi* Youth Associations are also effective political associations in Bawku.

### ***2.5 Religious Affiliation***

The majority of people in BEM practice Islam (51.1 percent) followed by the African Traditional Religion (ATR) (26.8 percent) and Christianity (20.3 percent), most of whom are Catholics (2000 Population and Housing Census: 50).

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<sup>33</sup> It must be stated here that when Kusasis are in control of the chieftaincy we can expect that the chiefs and council of elders will mostly be Kusasis and vice versa.

<sup>34</sup> [http://ghanadistricts.com/districts1on1/bawkumunicipal/?arrow=atd&\\_id=102&sa=4352](http://ghanadistricts.com/districts1on1/bawkumunicipal/?arrow=atd&_id=102&sa=4352) accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010

### 3.0 The Chieftaincy Conflicts in Ghana (BEM)

#### 3.1 Introduction

Ethnicity is often regarded as the main reason for conflicts in Africa (Tonah 2007:1, Nnoli 1998:1-5, Bayart 1993:41-59, Gyimah-Boadi and Mensah 2003:42, Horowitz 1985). While chieftaincy issues are generally regarded as a core of ethnic identity and conflicts, ethnicity and chieftaincy are often unclear and unspecified concepts. In this chapter, I will look at the genesis of the BCC. The theory of ethnicity and chieftaincy, and the protracted social conflict will also be dealt with.

Based on the information gathered during my fieldwork, my task in this chapter will be to understand how the *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* people define themselves as ethnic communities. What do they find as the distinctive constitutive elements that identify them as *Kusasi* or *Mamprusi*? I will also address five major factors leading to escalation of conflicts in Bawku based on the views of my respondents. At the end of this section, an analysis will be made based on the empirical information and that of the participant informants with a view to examining which of these factors sustains the conflict.

#### 3.2 The Genesis of the Bawku Chieftaincy Conflict

The committee appointed by Lord Listowel on the Bawku Chieftaincy (BC)<sup>35</sup> crisis confirmed that CI has become a source of conflict in the BEM between the *Kusasi* and the *Mamprusi* people. The report by the committee indicated that in the 1800's when the slave trade was still flourishing in Ghana, and particularly in the North, Na Atabia<sup>36</sup>, sent Prince Ali to establish a 'post' at Bawku and guard the route between *Nalerigu* and *Gambaga* in the south and *Tenkundugu* and *Wagadugu* in the north. According to the report by the committee, this was meant to safeguard the *Mamprusi* and white traders passing through Bawku to the south as robbers and burglars frequently attacked these traders.

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<sup>35</sup> This is based on the report of the Committee Appointed by the Acting Governor-General to inquire into and report its findings on the claim of Abugrago Azoka to have been elected or appointed and installed as chief of the *Kusasi* area (Bawku Affairs) and interviews with key political figures in BEM.

<sup>36</sup> Paramount chief and the overlord of the *Mamprusi* Traditional Area. He was also called the Nayiri: the landlord of *Nalerigu*. He was responsible for enskinning *Mamprusi* chiefs to the *Kusasi* area)

The findings of the committee also testified that the *Kusasis* did not have a centralised system of authority (rule). They were mostly organised under the fetish priests; the *Tindaana*<sup>37</sup> or clan heads, who performed the functions of chiefs (Rattray 1932:374-379, Tonah 2007:207). The *Mamprusis* on the other hand were organised under chiefs with centralised system of administration. The British who had had contacts with chiefs expected to find them in the *Kusasi* area. J.K.G Syme notes

“It has been suggested that in time to come the *Tindaanas* of the *Kusasis* would have evolved into chiefs in the real meaning of the word. They never got the chance to do it in their own leisurely way, however, for the British suddenly arrived from *Gambaga* and then came to the *Kusasi* asking for the chiefs. They had found them in *Gambaga* and expected to do the same in *Kusasi*, where, however, they were not in evidence”<sup>38</sup>.

According to the findings of the committee, Prince Ali, with the help of the British succeeded in establishing a firm ‘post’ on *Kusasi* land. This brought the Bawku area<sup>39</sup> directly under the governance of the *Mamprusis*, making Bawku an extra-territory of the paramount chief of the *Mamprusis*<sup>40</sup>. The *Mamprusis* employed carrots and sticks to consolidate territorial control over Bawku. A number of Princes governed Bawku until the death of Awuni, *Bawku-Naba* (chief of Bawku). Following his, not less than six (6) *Mamprusi* princes contested for the chieftaincy. These candidates went to the paramount chief of the *Mamprusis* to be appointed *Bawku-Naba*<sup>41</sup>. The report by the committee further noted that Prince Mahama Yiremia was appointed on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1957 as the *Bawku-Naba*. However, I deduced through my interviews that as the wind of freedom and political divorce from external rule and oppression was blowing throughout the Gold Coast<sup>42</sup> in the 1950’s, the *Kusasis* became more conscious about self-determination and oppression from alien power, in this case the *Nayiri*.

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<sup>37</sup> Overseer of the community land (The *Tindaana* was the custodian of the land and the religious leader of the *Kusasis*. According to history, “the Gur believed in and recognized the existence of an otiose high god whose name contains the root “Ngmini”, “Ngmini” and in others, “We” and “Wuni”. Below this god were tutelary spirits, the chief among which was the female earth shrine, known as “Tenge”. The custodian of the “Tenge” was the *Tindaana* or principal mediator between the people, the “Tenge” and the ancestral spirits of his particular area. The *Tindaana* had spiritual rather than secular control over the people residing in the area” (Brukum 2007:100, Rattray 1932).

<sup>38</sup> J. K. G Syme was the British District Commissioner of the *Kusasi* Area; he has also been quoted by Steven Tonah 2007 and Lund 2003

<sup>39</sup> *Kusasi* area and Bawku area refers to the same thing

<sup>40</sup> The *Nayiri* was the paramount chief of the *Mamprusis* and was responsible for nominating and installing chiefs to the Bawku area

<sup>41</sup> The *Nayiri* of the *Mamprusis* lived at Nalerigu.

<sup>42</sup> The Gold Coast was the old name of now modern Ghana. When the Portuguese, the first Europeans to arrive at the coast in 1471 (15<sup>th</sup> century) came, they saw vast quantities of gold between the rivers Ankobra and Volta, so they named the place Mina, which in their language meant mine. The British colonialist later adopted Gold Coast.

Around the same time, the *Mamprusi* Princes were gathering at *Nalerigu* to elect and install a chief for the *Kusasi* area, the *Kusasis* also gathered to elect and *enskin* Abugrago Azoka as the *Bawku-Naba* and the Head of the *Kusasis*. To the *Kusasis*, “colonialism and imperialism did not only mean British rule, but also the subjugation to an alien African ruler - the *Nayiri* and his representatives” (Ladouceur 1979:124).

From the above historical data on CI in the studied area, it comes out that the struggle for the BC became a tribal affair between the *Kusasi* and the *Mamprusi*. This apparently, according to the government report, resulted in a number of confrontations between the tribes, which drew the attention of the Governor-General of Ghana at the time, Lord Listowel to form a committee to investigate the issue. The committee concluded that Abugrago Azoka was not only appointed but also elected by his own people and installed as the chief of the *Kusasi* area in place of the usual *Nayiri* appointed *Bawku-Naba*. The committee also ruled that the old method of appointing a chief to go to Bawku and rule the *Kusasis* is dictatorial and greatly resented by *Kusasis*. The committee summed up that, the *Kusasis* would devolve politically and socially as well as economically better under their elected chief than under an imported chief whom they resent.

The *Mamprusis* took the case to an appeal court headed by K.A. Korsah. The claim was that, the interpretation by the committee that Abugrago Azoka has been elected and installed as the chief of the *Kusasi* area is not the same as saying that he has been installed as the chief of the Bawku area, since the chief of the *Kusasi* area and the chief of the Bawku area are not the same. The court however ruled in favour of the *Kusasis* that the chief of Bawku and the chief of the *Kusasi* area are synonymous therefore; the two titles can be interchanged.

The field observation and interviews suggest that succession dispute to the chieftaincy throne was the genesis of the BCC. This observation compares with earlier study that ethnic conflicts in the country relate to chieftaincy succession (Tsikata and Seini 2004:25). Steven Tonah similarly observed the issue of chieftaincy succession among the *Dagbon* people in Northern Ghana as a cause of the murder of the king of *Dagbon* (2007:14). During the fieldwork, it was observed that unlike the case of *Dagbon* where the *Andanis* and *Abudus* had the same grandfather and alternate succession, the *Mamprusis* and the *Kusasis* do not alternate succession among them. This winner takes all affair may have contributed to the observed fierce nature of ascending to the throne. The *Mamprusis* have their own chiefs while the *Kusasis* also have their own chiefs but the issue to contend with between these two ethnic

groups is about paramount chief, as the *Mamprusis* do not recognise the *Kusasi Bawku-Naba* as a paramount chief.

### 3.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Chieftaincy Conflicts

Many argue that most of the conflicts in African are based on ethnicity, which is because of pluralism or the multi-ethnic nature of post-colonial Africa states (Tonah 2007:14, Bayart 1993:41f, Nnoli 1998:1-5, Braathen et al 2000:3f). However, the core behind the ethnic conflicts differs from place to place; it can be political, economic, socio-cultural, religious or resources (Horowitz 1985:12). For instance, the 1993 presidential elections in Nigeria created intense ethnic conflicts between the *Hausa* and the *Mambilla*, *Ogoni* and *Andoni*, *Tiv* and *Jukun* (Nnoli 1998:2), which was also the case in Liberia and Kenya. In Mali and Niger, for example the *Tuaregs* have blamed their respective government for alienating them from having a fair share in resources, which has resulted in ethnic clashes. In Algeria, the *Berbers* have engaged in violent ethnic conflicts because of cultural marginalization in the country (Nnoli 1998:2). These different dimensions of ethnic conflicts in other parts of Africa are not different from the case of Ghana and the study area in particular. Chieftaincy which is a traditional political position based on ethnicity has been identified by some scholars as the root cause of most conflict in Ghana (Tsikata and Seini 2004:25, Brukum 2007:107).

### The Concept of Ethnicity

From my reading of literature on the subject, the concept of ethnicity in a broad-spectrum may point to a group of people who have a common ancestry, belief, language, culture and the consciousness of belongingness, which has been passed on from one generation to another through socialization (Bayart 1993:42f, Tonah 2007:5-10). In Ghana, as in many other African countries, the perspective of ethnicity was not used until the 1960's (Bayart 1993:41, Tonah 2007:6f). According to Tonah, 'tribe' was used, instead, in referring to acephalous people<sup>43</sup> such as the *Kusasi*, *Kasena* and *Konkomba* in Northern Ghana. Later ethnicity came to be applied to centralized societies such as the *Mamprusi* and the *Ashanti* people (Tonah 2007:6f).

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<sup>43</sup> Groups without a centralized system of administration or chiefs

Brass (1996) classifies ethnic groups or ethnicity into three main categories. Firstly, in terms of the objective outlooks of a people. Secondly, in terms of subjective thoughts, and thirdly in relation to the behavior of a group of people. However, in this study the first two classifications will be considered. The objective concept of ethnicity spells out a distinctive cultural identity that separates one ethnic group from another. This presupposes that the group involved must have at least a minimum contact or affiliation with each other. Eriksen defines an ethnic group as “an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction” (1993:12). The above definition by Eriksen suggests that ethnic groups are those people who have a unique culture and common dwelling place or territory with regular contacts with each other. This however separates them from others. Will this culturally distinctive sense of ethnicity as noted by Eriksen apply to people who have parents belonging to different ethnic groups? How will those people see themselves?

The subjective attribute of ethnicity or an ethnic group on the other hand is the shared sense of consciousness among a distinct group of people which separates them from others. A definition by Max Weber (1968) elaborates more on the subjective element of an ethnic group. According to him, ethnic groups are “those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of custom or both or because of memories of colonization and migration” (quoted in Croucher 2004:117).

The above definitions of ethnicity as objective or subjective is vital because it forms the locus of the “appreciation of systematic distinction between insiders and outsiders; between Us and Them” (Eriksen 1993:18). This label of ethnic identity in the form of “Us” and “Them” gives a group their symbolic meaning. Nnoli argued that what makes ethnic identity conflict prone is its symbolic dimension. He noted that “ethnicity has the symbolic capacity of defining for the individual the totality of his existence including embodying his hopes, fears and sense of the future” (1998:5). He argued that for this justification the individual become sensitive to matters of ethnic symbolism. In such instance any action that seems to denigrate ones ethnic group status from its perceived due in the inter-ethnic scheme of things result in hostilities and violent response (ibid). He further opined that by undermining the group its due “strike at the very symbolic existence of individual members of the reference group, even though the action may not be directed at the personally” (ibid). This may result in conflicts as individuals believe that their very existence is dependent on that of their ethnic group.

The symbolic element of ethnic identity becomes more evident in resources allocation. This is buttressed by Bayart who argued that; interaction of identity becomes the structure of power and allocation of power and resources (1998:51). Ethnic identity therefore dictates who gets what, when and how in society. This problem of identity as a means of resources allocation is problematic. As has been argued by Brukum (2007:104f) and Braathen (2000:6f), the colonialist needed chiefs to help them rule<sup>44</sup>. This led to the appointment of chiefs from a particular ethnic group to be rulers. The chieftaincy institutions that were established by these chiefs were based on ethnicity. This made one ethnic group superior and the other inferior. As noted by Bayart ‘‘Tribalist<sup>45</sup> think, more or less consciously, that men and women of their tribe and clan are superior to others, and that as a result the others should serve and obey them. The Tribalists try to impose the hegemony, the predominance of his tribe and his clan’’ (1993:42). Based on this idea of ethnicity, ethnic conflict becomes inevitable. Trutz Von Trotha observed that the idea of the monopolization of functions and decision-making by the state has given way to ‘political tribalization’ or ‘cultural ethnicization’ in most African countries and the institution supposed to play a leading role in this process is the chieftaincy institution (2006:90f).

Brukum asserted that ethnic conflicts on chieftaincy are not always inter-ethnic. He presented the case of an intra-ethnic chieftaincy conflict between the *Dagombas* where succession of chieftaincy has led to conflicts between the *Andanis* and the *Abudus*. However, Nnoli has also argued that ‘‘the role of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Africa is not merely negative it has made some positive contribution to the progress of African societies’’ (1998:5). A similar point is made by Bayart who noted that chieftaincy has helped to bring together categories that were previously heterogeneous (1993). These views by Bayart and Nnoli may in a way contradict Braathen who argued that ‘‘ethnic group affiliation often structures the composition of groups in conflict...one of the reasons why people kill each other is who they are and the identity they represent’’ (2000:3).

### **The social conflict theory**

Edward Azar (1985) in an article ‘‘Protracted International Conflict: Ten Propositions’’ coined the term *Protracted Social Conflict* (PSC) to denote ‘‘hostile interactions between groups that are based in deep-seated racial, ethnic, religious and cultural hatreds and which

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<sup>44</sup> These chiefs were from ethnic groups with a centralized system of authority.

<sup>45</sup> Referring to ethnicity



persist over long periods of time with periodic outbreaks of violence” (quoted in Fisher 2001:308)<sup>46</sup>. My interest will be to discover whether the conflict under study can be seen as a protracted social conflict?

According to Azar individuals in a particular locality aims at satisfying their collective needs and aspirations through their collective identity. He also pointed out that historical, social, economic, colonial and psychological factors lead to structural inequalities among various groups and difficult access to political power (human needs) which is expressed in the form of domination of one (ethnic) group over another. The dominant social group strives to advance its political needs and security at the expense of the other groups. This leads to discrimination, grievances, victimization and socialization of communal hatreds which individuals express collectively (quoted in Fisher 2001:308). Azar further stressed that colonialism, through the divide and rule system adopted by the colonialists resulted in division among the people. Multi-ethnic societies in the aftermath of colonialism therefore resulted in the domination by a single communal group. This communal group ignores the hues and cries of other communal groups leading to polarization:

“When a communal group is denied distinct identity, effective participation in societal decision-making and other basic needs, they will take action to address their victimization, triggering increased state of oppression and escalation of conflict” (quoted in fisher 2001:308).

In the data analysis, it will be my interest to know if any of the studied ethnic groups suffer denial of unique identity, participation in public affairs or victimization. The analysis shall also include a reflection on whether these are part of the causes of the conflict in BEM. My task therefore would be to determine if the conflict under study has the characteristic of what scholars are calling protracted conflict.

### **3.4 Can the *Kusasis* and *Mamprusis* be seen as Different Ethnic Groups in BEM?**

From my presentation of ethnicity in the second section of this chapter and the data from the field, I will not be wrong to say that, the *Kusasi* and the *Mamprusi* people are two different ethnic groups in Bawku. The difference in identity is usually indicated by facial tribal marks. In addition both groups speak different languages: the *Kusasis* speak the *Kusaal* language

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<sup>46</sup> <http://jpr.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/38/3/307> (assessed on 26th February 2010)

while the *Mamprusis* speak the *Mampruli* language. Also the *Kusasi* people are located in the outskirts of Bawku while the *Mamprusi* people are located in the central part of the town. The *Mamprusis* celebrate the *Damba* festival while the *Kusasis* celebrate the *Samanpid* festival. They share different beliefs and identity as well. This difference in identity may have resulted in the perceived conflicts in the area. It must be made clear here that even though some people in Bawku may have parents from mixed ethnic group; the children always inherit from the father's side because of the patrilineal system of inheritance in the area.

### **3.5 Sources of Chieftaincy Conflicts in BEM**

This section of my research project tackles the sources of chieftaincy conflicts in BEM. It has been argued by some scholars that "although chieftaincy is at the root of most of the conflicts presently in Ghana, their causes differ from one place to another (Brukum 2007:207). This section of the chapter presents five underlying sources of chieftaincy conflicts in BEM. The data used in the section is based on the respondents' view on the sources of conflicts in the studied area.

#### ***The Colonial Factor***

As the case of Burundi and Rwanda reveals before the coming of the Belgians (Rutake and Gahama 1998:79, Bayart 1998:51), no significant differences existed between the *Kusasis* and the *Mamprusis* before the coming of the British, the colonialist may have forced a separation. The British colonialist manipulated the *Mamprusis* and the *Kusasis* on ethnic lines. As has been noted by Bayart "although it would be too much to maintain that all contemporary ethnic groups are the product of the colonial period, the precipitation of ethnic identities become incomprehensible if it is divorced from colonial rule" (1993:51). The colonialist reduced identity of people to their ethnicity (Braathen 2000:8).

While discussing chieftaincy and ethnic conflicts in the Northern region of Ghana, Brukum argued that the British colonialism and indirect rule partly contributed to conflicts in the country (Tonah 2007:97 see also Braathen et al 2000:6f). He further argued that the introduction of indirect rule increased and enhanced chiefly power (p: 105). While commenting on the Bawku conflict, Emmanuel Bombande also observed that the British colonialists gained acquaintance with the *Mamprusis* and that such acquaintance facilitated

the imposition of indirect rule on the *Kusasi* people (Tonah 2007:207). As in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis in the case of Belgium, the British colonialists might have viewed the *Mamprusis* as more knowledgeable, organised, warriors and endowed with leadership qualities. From what Brukum and Bombande observed above, the British colonialists seems to have viewed the *Kusasi* people as backward, uncivilized, and acephalous fit to be ruled by the superior and more organised *Mamprusis*. The policy of divide-and-rule which was administrated through the indirect system of rule, made it possible for the British to have political, economic and financial control over the people by using their own chiefs (Dankwa 2004:6). As various ethnic groups were brought together and forced to live under one political administration without considering the ethnic affiliations of the people (Nnoli 1998:4). This may have denied an ethnic group a distinct identity and participation in public affairs. Most of the participant informants suspected that this policy by the British to bring an alien to rule a foreign land empowered the *Mamprusis* at the expense of the *Kusasis*, which escalated into conflicts in the 1950's.

Perhaps had the colonialists not come to the area to make the *Bawku-Naba* chiefs over the *Kusasis*, the bitterness that has accumulated for decades between these groups would not be there in the first place. The colonial element cannot be separated from the recent ethnic conflicts in Bawku. The colonialist privileged ethnic groups with a centralized authority over ethnic groups without such authority. This may seem to collaborate an earlier observation made by Braathen et al that "...the colonial powers privileged the ones (ethnic groups) with monarchical, authoritarian, and patriarchal notions of customary" (2000:6). However, the respondents who suspected the colonial factor asserted that the conflict in recent times has become more violent than it was in the late 1950's. If that is the case, then what accounts for this? Colonial intervention in Bawku chieftaincy dates years back, why have Ghanaians not been able to resolve the conflict after 53 years of independence. Others also had different opinions of the source of conflict in BEM.

### ***Land Tenure System (Land Disputes)***

Adams, defines land tenure as "the system of rights and institutions that governs access to and use of land" (2001)<sup>47</sup>. In that sense land, tenure may be described as the term use to describe the ownership and uses of land. Land in the UER and Ghana in general can be

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[http://www.uneca.org/eca\\_resources/publications/srdcs/land\\_tenure\\_systems\\_and\\_sustainable\\_development\\_in\\_southern\\_africa.pdf](http://www.uneca.org/eca_resources/publications/srdcs/land_tenure_systems_and_sustainable_development_in_southern_africa.pdf) accessed on 18th March 2010

acquired through four means: conquest, settlement, as a gift or through purchase (Poguki 1955). Atteh and Tonah notes that

‘‘The appreciation of the value of land has made it a lucrative and an inevitable property and hence the scramble by persons, both royals and non-royals, for the position of a chief, which will give them access and control over lands belonging to the communities’’ (2007:150).

Most of the interview respondents identified the issue of land as a major cause of conflict in BEM. What usually creates land disputes in the area concerns chieftaincy (power)? The chief in BEM controls all lands (including water and other natural resources). The land factor of the conflict in BEM may support the observation made by Bayart that ethnic identity is tied on power and allocation of resources (1993:51). The *Kusasi* people base their claim of ownership over the Bawku land on settlement, arguing that they were the first ethnic group to have inhabited the area (Rattray 1932:375, Lund 2003:592). The argument raised here by the *Kusasis* is that, the land belonged to the *Tindaana* before the coming of the *Mamprusi* people. On the other hand, the *Mamprusi* people base their claim of ownership of the Bawku land on conquest, arguing that the *Nayiri* was the overall protector of the Bawku area, the *Tindaana* only had a delegated power given to him by the *Nayiri*. In the view of the *Mamprusi* informants, the *Tindaana* was only a regent (see Lund 2003:592f).

The respondents also argued that ‘‘without control over land a chief is no chief’’. However, this was not the case in the pre-colonial era. Consider what Jeffrey Herbst notes below

‘‘...in large parts of pre-colonial Africa, control tended to be exercised over people rather than land, land was plentiful and population thin on the ground. Indeed, many pre-colonial polities were surrounded by large tracts of land that were open politically or physically or both. As land was not seen as the constraining resources, exercising political power meant control over individuals’’ (Herbst 1997:127f).

It must be pointed out here that, the *Tindaana* controlled the land under his occupation mostly among the non-centralized societies while the chiefs ruled over the people in centralized societies (Rattray 1932:376). However, with an ever increasing population on a fixed land area of 2097 sq.km and a population density of 147 persons per sq.km (2000 Population and Housing Census:28) in BE, competition for land has become keen as both *Kusasis* and *Mamprusis* need land for various purposes including housing and agriculture. The

government census indicated that 80 percent of the people in BE are engaged in farming activities. The subsequent interview excerpt appears to confirm that issues about land in the studied municipality contribute to the observed conflict:

‘I have seven children; the last one is five years old. It is my responsibility to secure the family land so that when he grows up he can farm on it and pass it on to his children as my father did for me. Land is what my forefathers gave me and I will defend it even if with my blood’.

In that sense, the informant appears unwilling to negotiate his inherited land as ‘lands in the Bawku area in general, had been family owned for a long time’ (Lund 2003:597). Would such attitude escalate land dispute in the area? Perhaps such strong lineage attachment to land contributes to the observed insecurity and killing of people in BEM. How will others in the society without family inherited lands react to such attitude? They may revolt against the attachment of land to family lineage. This analysis therefore could be viewed from the perspective of the *protracted conflict theory and ethnic identity*.

### ***The Celebration of Festival***

The field transcript shows that the *Damba* and *Samanpid* festivals have played a role in the conflict in BEM. Particular ethnic groups celebrate these festivals. The claim to first occupation of Bawku land by the *Kusasis* is signified by the annual celebration of the *Samanpid* festival in November and December. The significance of this festival has two dimensions. First, to prove that the *Kusasis* are the original and rightful owners of the land. Second, to give thanks to the god’s of the land for a bumper harvest and ask for their protection and guidance in the ensuing year. The paramount chief (the *Bawku-Naba*) who the *Mamprusis* do not recognise performs the ritual aspects of this festival.

According to some *Mamprusi* respondents, instead of the *Kusasi* people to perform sacrifices at the shrine during the celebration of the festival, they perform it at the community centre which belongs to all people in the municipality whether Muslims or non-Muslims. This seems to buttress an earlier observation made by Lund (2003:596). This insistence by the *Kusasi* people to perform the ritual at the community centre, according to the *Mamprusis*, is meant to offend or provoke them. This may have contributed to the protracted conflicts in the study area. The respondents reminded me that in 1983, 1984 and 1985 major conflict erupted during the celebration of this festival. According to these respondents, the conflict in 1985 during the

*Samanpid* festival was the first real battle between the *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* ethnic groups as arms (machine guns and AK47 rifles) were introduced in the conflict and women and children targeted. The respondents wanted us to believe that since then, the celebration of the *Samanpid* festival has become the source of social unrest in BEM.

They also indicated that the *Damba* festival celebrated by the *Mamprusi* inhabitants has also created conflict in Bawku in recent times. According to the *Kusasi* respondents, the *Mamprusi* residents have persistently refused to acknowledge the “lordship” of the *Bawku-Naba* by refusing to ask permission from him before the celebration of the *Damba* festival. The *Mamprusi* inhabitants on the other hand bicker that they see no reason to inform the *Bawku-Naba* before they celebrate their festival since they do not recognise the legitimacy of him. This has also resulted in disputes in Bawku, the latest clashes supposed to have been experienced in March 2010. In what follows, other respondents present different opinions on the major sources of chaos in BEM.

### ***Political Interference***

Some of the respondents during the fieldwork also argued that the politicisation of the BC is a major source of conflict in the municipality. This finding relates Christian Lund’s observation that almost every government in Ghana has played the ‘political game’ with the BC (Lund 2003). One of my respondents also said that “BC is remotely controlled by Ghanaian politicians”. In this case the respondent may be taken to mirror an observation by Braathen et al that “manipulation of ethnicity by elites has to be complemented with an understanding of social mobilization” (2000:8). As has been observed, with the introduction of multi-party democracy in the 1950’s, ethnic polarization and chieftaincy conflicts took on political colours. Chiefs became actively involved in politics (Lund 2003:595). A case in context is that with the formation of the Northern People’s Party (NPP), an ethnically based political party, the *Nayiri* became involved in politics because of his close affiliation with prominent politicians. However, because of the unity that the institution of chieftaincy is supposed to promote and preserve, chiefs by law are not allowed to engage in partisan politics (1992 Constitution of Ghana).

Political events leading to Ghana’s independence saw the emergence of two major political parties; the Convention People’s Party (CPP) and the United Party (UP). Nkrumah the leader of the CPP is quoted to have said

“those of our chiefs who are with us... we do honour... those ... who join forces with the imperialist ... there shall come a time when they will run away fast and leave their sandals behind them; in other words, chiefs in league with imperialists who obstruct our path... will one day run away and leave their Stools or Skins” (Rathbone 2000:22).

Given the above data from Nkrumah, It can be inferred that the CPP was a mass based political party, which despised CI, as the leadership of the party seems to have seen a strong link between centralised societies and the colonial administration. The UP, on the other hand lead by Danquah and Busia, was noted to be an elite political party, which cherished CI (Lund 2003:590, Boahene 2000, Apter 1968). When the CPP came to power in 1957, the party was noted to have escalated the existing chieftaincy conflict by *diskinning*<sup>48</sup> *Mamprusi* chiefs and *enskinning*<sup>49</sup> *Kusasi* chiefs (Lund 2003:591). All the respondents who held the political factor as the source of conflict in BEM agreed that this decision by the CPP government marked the genesis of the politicisation of the BC. Nkrumah also detained many *Mamprusi* chiefs because of an assassination attack on him at *Kulungugu* (Lund 2003:593).

When the CPP government was overthrown by the National Liberation Council (NLC) on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1966, the *Mamprusis* appealed to the new military government to change what they described as the wrongful occupation of the BC by the *Kusasis* (Lund 2003:593). The NLC government passed the Chieftaincy Amendment Decree 1966, otherwise known as NLCD 112, which *deskinned*<sup>50</sup> the *Kusasi* chief (*Bawku-Naba*) and *enskinned*<sup>51</sup> a *Mamprusi* chief (as *Bawku-Naba*). The chieftaincy remained with the *Mamprusis* until the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) came to power through a military coup in 1979 and 1981 (Lund 2003:595 also refer to page: 13). A *Kusasi* influential figure is said to have lobbied for the return of the chieftaincy to the *Kusasis* (Lund 2003:595). The Provisional National Defence Council passed the PNDC laws 75 Chieftaincy (Restoration of Status of Chiefs) laws, 1983, under which the BC was restored to the *Kusasis* (Lund 2003:595f).

According to Lund, with the coming to force of the Fourth Republic Constitution of Ghana and the reintroduction of multi-party democracy, the politicization of the BC seems to have deepened. Both the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) began to manipulate the Bawku conflict on political line. During the 1992 to 2008 general elections, *Mamprusis* generally supported and rallied behind the NPP with the hope that a

<sup>48</sup> The act of demoting a chief in the Northern part of Ghana.

<sup>49</sup> The election and installment of a chief in the Northern part of Ghana.

<sup>50</sup> Demoted

<sup>51</sup> Installed

victory for the NPP will reverse the PNDC law 75 and bring back NLCD 112, restoring the chieftaincy to them. However when the NPP came to power in 2000, the PNDC Law 75 was not changed and the chieftaincy remained with the *Kusasis* (2003:600f). Several respondents pointed out that since 1992, any presidential and parliamentary election have resulted in clashes between *Kusasis* who are mostly NDC supporters and *Mamprusis* who support the NPP. I was also informed that since 1992 whenever NDC is in power the MCE (formally called the District Chief Executive, DCE) is a *Kusasi* and when the NPP is in power, the MCE is always a *Mamprusi*. This observation in BEM also corresponds to that of Cote d'voire where there is ethnicization of political parties. For instance, Konate has argued with respect to Cote d'voire that

“the struggle for political power among the political elite has resulted in the sharp division of the country along ethnic/regional lines. In 2002 regional elections, the northern group threw their weight behind the Rassemblement des Republicains (RDR) party, the Akans voted for the Parti Democratique de Cote d'voire (PDCI) and the Bete of south-western Cote d'voire voted for the ruling Front Populaire Ivoiten (FPI) party”(2004:39).

In the final analysis, it appears that ethnic group affiliation has become a means of social organisation among the residents in BEM. This may confirm the Afrobarometer Round 2 survey in Ghana, which stated that ethnic solidarity, and regionalism among Ghanaians is strong (Gyimah-Boadi and Mensah 2003:42). Eriksen argues that “ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction”(1993:12, see also Bayart 1998:53). He further elaborated that ethnicity is the “appreciation of systematic distinction between insiders and outsiders: between Us and Them” (p: 18). According to the primordialists, this “Us and Them” division is passed on from one generation to another through the socialization processes (Tonah 2007:7). From the above data, it may be said that ethnicity is the locus for social formation, since the “Us and Them” feeling may perhaps instigate ethnic groups to view other ethnic groups as different. Given the above data from Eriksen and the primordialists, one can agree with Christian Lund that “ethnicised political competition can be seen, at least partly, as an attempt by various groups to solicit the recognition of rights and status by national and other levels of government” (Lund 2003:588).



Nevertheless, one may say that the question that needs to be addressed here is why has ethnicity become the dominant form of social organization in BEM? It also appears that the subordination of the *Kusasi* non-centralized states under the *Mamprusi* centralized states during colonial period in Ghana play a role in the existing enmity among the *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* people. It might have also intensified ethnic group affiliations. During the field research, I observed that the studied people found security and comfort in belonging to their own ethnic group than another; they see their group to be capable of providing them with all their needs. This has been extended to national politics as a particular ethnic group supports a particular political party with the view that that party can provide them with all their political, social and economic needs. Such attitude could escalate the prevailing conflict especially during political campaigns and elections in the municipality.

### ***The Media***

There is reason to believe that the media has had high impact on conflicts. Hoijer et al pointed out that

“There can hardly be any doubts about the late-modern society being marked by globalisation processes in many respects. The media and new information and communication technologies are of great importance to development – most globalisation theorists agree that new media, like satellite television and the internet, are the decisive agents in these processes. The news industry is of key importance here and the total transnational flow of news has increased substantially over the last decades. As media consumers, we are simply offered more information than ever before about what is happening in foreign countries” (2004:16).

From the above data, I will not be over egging the pudding to say that the media is a very useful instrument for information. Nevertheless, it may also create conflicts if not used with precision as indicated from my field transcript.

According to the participant respondents, the media have also play a role in escalating the conflict in BEM. Due to the delicate nature of the situation on the ground, any report by any media is considered very vital. The respondents insisted that the Ghanaian media has occasionally been used in inciting stereotyping and ethnic prejudice. They revealed further that the media in recent times have reported falsely on the Bawku conflict due to inaccurate information on the actualities on the ground. This information from my respondents may seem to collaborate the assertion by Martin Bell that it is impossible for the media to report

objectively especially in conflict zones (in Hojjer 2004:13). This has raised tension and a state of insecurity in BEM. It may be that the accused media have developed the habit of reporting negatively on the situation at Bawku just to sabotage the government. It seems to be the case given that the informant claimed improvement in the state of condition of Bawku is rarely reported. Such abuse of press freedom and reporting of cases without proper investigation may pose a challenge to efforts directed toward the resolution of the existing conflict. This would suggest that the media must censor its reportage on the BEM conflict. Though the media could be expected to play a key role if peace is to be secured in Bawku, the above data seem to indicate that it has rather intensified disputes.

### 3.6 Political Influence as the Major Cause of Conflict in BEM

The paragraph that follows discusses the main source of conflict in BEM using the data from the field<sup>52</sup>. The analysis here is based on the data collected from respondents and the observed events in the municipality.

**Fig: 3.0 Respondents Views on the Sources of Conflict in BEM<sup>53</sup>**

Sources of Conflict	No. of Respondents
Colonial factor	4
Land Issues	13
Festivals	10
Political Interference	15
Media	8
total	50

The data above shows that certain number of people believes that political interference in chieftaincy is the major source of conflict in BEM, accounting for most of the conflicts in the area. This could raise questions about the institution of chieftaincy in BEM. This seems more so since the 1992 Constitution of Ghana debars chiefs from active politics: ‘‘a chief shall not take part in active party politics; and any chief wishing to do so and seeking election to parliament shall abdicates his stool or skin’’ (Article 276(1)). This debarment might be

<sup>52</sup> The respondents are 50 because of the 5 additional key politicians interviewed on the sources of Chieftaincy conflict in BEM.

<sup>53</sup> Some of the respondents gave more than one reason for the sources of conflict, however, I grouped the sources according to what factor those respondents thought was the major source of conflict in the municipality. Example if a respondent group the sources of the conflict as 1. Land tenure. 2, Colonial factor. 3, Media etc I put him or her under Land tenure because in terms of priority it's the first.

expected to enhance peaceful coexistence among the people given that the chief is considered as a symbol of unity, law and order (Dankwa 2004:26). If this is the case, why has the CI been influenced by politics? (Refer data on page: 45-48).

During the pre-colonial era, a chief was defined as somebody ‘‘who in accordance with custom had been nominated, elected, enstooled or enskinned as a chief or, as the case may be, appointed and installed as such’’ (Dankwa 2004:19). This conception of a chief meant that the raise to the throne was ordained by tradition based on the total consent of the people (refer to page: 16). However, during the colonial period this conception of a chief was changed. A chief was defined as someone ‘‘who in accordance with customary law, had been nominated, elected and installed as a chief or, as the case may be, appointed and installed as such and who, for the time being, was recognized by the government’’ (Dankwa 2004:19).

The last phrase of the colonial definition of a chief ‘‘recognized by government’’ meant that if a person enjoys the consent of the people but lacks the support of the government then he ceases to be a chief. On the other hand, if a person lacks the support of the people but have the backing of the government then he is legally recognized as a chief. This new conception and attitude towards chiefs may partly have influenced political affiliations in BEM. The evidence from the field seems to suggest that in the studied area, affiliations to political parties are largely by ethnicity. The existence of ethnically based party affiliations in the form of patron-client relations may prove that chieftaincy in the select site remains nonautonomous, subjected to government’s legal regulation and recognition.

Other political figures have also regarded both the *Mamprusis* and *Kusasis* as custodians of the land and chieftaincy. One informant mentioned that a former minister of Interior said ‘‘ I am appealing to the chiefs of the *Mamprusis* and *Kusasis* in Bawku to hold restraint’’. By this appeal, the minister has acknowledged both ethnic groups as legal custodians of the land and chieftaincy. This according to the *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* respondents is not the case. In March 2010, when the National Security authorized the *Mamprusis* to suspend the celebration of the *Damba* festival because of security reasons, the spokesperson of the *Mamprusi* people reacted and contended that the decision was politically motivated and accused the government of being bias<sup>54</sup>. This seems to have influenced the clashes between the *Kusasis* and *Mamprusis* during elections and other political activities in the municipality (refer to page: 15 and

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<sup>54</sup> <http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/201003/43655.asp>, accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010

footnote 11). The informant observed that from the chain of events since 1957, governments have been able to adjust existing laws to favour one ethnic group over the other (refer pages: 45-48). Accordingly, each group either wants to protect what it has (chieftaincy) or fight for what it has lost during previous political regime.

The recent violent nature of the conflict appears to imply an external influence. A discussion with the security personals on ground revealed that modern high-tech weaponry (such as the AK47 rifles, G-3 and machine guns) have been used in the conflict. The crucial question may be how these people acquire such an expensive and illegal weapons. Given the fact that such weapons are not permitted for private use, one can infer that others interested in the conflict supply such weapons. Many of the informants expressed similar sentiment. They even suspected that some corrupt police personnels and politicians have a hand in this. This observation will authenticate the Afrobarometer Round 2 survey in Ghana, which stated that police personnels and government officials in general are corrupt (Gyimah-Boadi and Mensah 2003:38). The suspected external influence in the conflict with regards to the supply of weapons would be a crucial concern in any serious attempt towards peace building in the area.

### ***3.7 Summary***

The chapter has looked at the sources of conflicts in BEM, the concept of ethnicity and chieftaincy, and the protracted social conflict theory. The chapter gave evidence that the *Kusasis* and the *Mamprusis* are two different ethnic groups in BEM. The study also revealed that the conflict in BEM is a protracted conflict. The field material dyed-in-the-wool that the underlying causes of conflicts in BEM are numerous. It came out that the major causes of conflicts in Bawku includes; influences from colonial past, land issues, celebration of local festivals, media and political influences. However, political influence on chieftaincy was portrayed as the major cause of conflict in Bawku. One factor for the large political influence on chieftaincy was ascribed to the change in the definition of a chief during the colonial period. Another factor also attributed to ethnicised party based politics. It was also noted that some corrupt police personnels and politicians as well as others who have interest in the conflict might perhaps be supplying weapons to the volatile area.

## 4.0 Women and Conflicts in BEM

### 4.1 Introduction

For the purpose of lucidity, this chapter of my research project has been divided into sections. These sections are further divided into sub-sections. The chapter spans the women situation in BEM based on the field transcript. This includes the role of women in the institution of the Bawku chieftaincy, how the conflict affects both men and women and the reasons to expect that the BCC affect women and men differently. My main objective in this chapter is to present the effects of chieftaincy conflict on BEM women, and how they can possibly help to resolve the conflict. The information in this chapter applies to both *Mamprusi* and *Kusasi* women, as both ethnic groups perceive women in the same way.

### 4.2 Theoretical perspectives

The conflict theory has been used by feminist theorist to deduct and give explanations to the reasons why women have been historically, culturally and socially excluded from taking active role in most social institutions. This has often been attributed to patriarchy (Miller 2001:80f). Patriarchy has been defined as “that system of social structures and practices in which men dominate and, oppress and exploit women” (Miller 2001:81). *The feminist conflict theory* argues that, all other things being equal, women have been systematically browbeaten by men in the society because of control over limited natural and man-made resources enjoyed wholly by men (Skjelsbæk 2001, Dahlerup 2001:104).

The theory holds that, wealth, power/position and status are valuable resources but scarce; the inherit nature of men and the scarcity of these resources means domestication of the role of women in society (Skjelsbæk 2001:1). Gierycz has observed that

“ throughout history government structures, principle of governance and decision-making processes have been developed almost exclusively by men. Women have been confined to the private sphere..., therefore, the baseline for most contemporary patterns of governance, decision-making and related activities originates from models created by men (for men)<sup>55</sup>. Their implementation as public policy structures and modus operandi remains strongly gendered. As newcomers women have had to adjust to existing structures and look for ways to include their interest and accommodate their working styles” (2001:23).

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<sup>55</sup> My emphasis

This line of argument by Gierycz is buttressed by Skjelsbæk who pointed out that "... male norms and male behavior have been taken to represent the human norm" (2001:1).

On the contrary, Miller has also asserted that patriarchy should not be seen only in terms of male domination of women. But rather it should be seen in terms of genealogy, gender and generation. He stressed that the main limitation of patriarchy as defined by Weber and others is the omission of the kinship relations, factual or fictive that exist between older and younger men and women. Miller further opined that patriarchy should be understood as the marginalization and oppression not only of women in the kinship collective, but also the oppression and marginalization of men as well (2001:80-83).

Deducing from the preceding argument, other scholars have also argued that women should not only be seen as victims of conflicts but also potential for peace (Padarath 1998:66, Bouta and Freak 2002). Drude Dahlerup argued further that even though conflict affects both men and women, women should be involved in decision making and conflict resolution processes based on four reasons: as a matter of justice, women and men have different values, women and men have conflicting interests and also because women have potential for making a change (2001:105). This confirms Samuel's analyses of women's involvement in conflict resolution using the case of Sri Lanka and how those women challenged their oppression and marginalization by state actors (Samuel 2001). Gierycz (2001:24) and Samuel (2001:189-193) have argued further that women have mobilized as a unique entity to address their victimization in society. Nevertheless, Mpoumou using women experiences in DR. Congo has asserted that women are mobilized by international conventions and policy guidelines (2004:120-122).

#### **4.3 Situation of Women in the BEM**

The figures used in this section are based on the 2000 Housing and Population Census of the UER, (2000:31-63). The Census estimates that women constitute about 52 percent of the total population of approximately 300,000 in BE. Women form the majority of the economically active population with 69 percent employed mostly in the informal sector. In addition, the census showed that 69 percent of all women in BEM are married with a fertility rate of 4.4 percent, indicating one of the highest in the UER. Could it be that the conflict in the area contributes to the 10.4 percent widows in the locality as estimated by the Census? My interview interactions with individual women in the study community suggested that in BEM

(as in many areas in Ghana) married women are more respected than the unmarried is. This may perhaps be a contributing factor to the high fertility rate in the locality as most women marry to have societal respect.

My observations in the municipality indicated also that women in BEM might be classified as urban and rural. The urban women are usually traders, who buy goods from big cities to sell in BEM. This class of women may not be permanently based in BEM. The majority of the women who could be classified as rural women are permanent residents in BEM who are mostly engaged in farming, sheabutter and groundnut oil extraction, brewing of local alcoholic drink (pito), milling or grinding of millet, sorghum and maize for domestic use, dawadawa processing, weaving and dress making, pottery and rice pile boiling (rice processing). This classification of women is vital for the reason that urban and rural women may be affected differently by the conflict in BEM.

#### **4.4 Women and Decision-Making in BEM**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for Ghana in 2007 pointed out that

“gender has been identified as closely associated with exclusion...women and girls are disproportionately exposed to disadvantage due to their weak control over resources, power and their sexuality and persistent male biased socio-cultural norms and practices” (2007:8).

My field data indicates that traditional perspective about women as pointed out in the UNDP seems to discourage the women’s active participation in decision-making at the family level. However, my interactions with the CWGB suggested that women are consulted in some instances such as outdoor of a newly born baby, division of household chores among the children and other matters concerning children. I noted also that the mother has a role in the family by influencing the choice of wife for the son. Nevertheless, the CWGB insisted that final decisions lie in the hands of the man who is the final authority in the house. The CWGB explained further that what transpires in the household level reflects the case at the municipal level. Men normally take leadership roles. At the time of my research, it was noted that among the thirty-two elected Assembly Members in BEM, only one was a woman and out of the fifteen appointed members, four were women.

I would admit that the preceding data corroborate the earlier observation that women in the area seems not to enjoy similar social privileges as men. What has made me to question the marginalization of women in BEM in decision-making is a reflection on a book by Drude Dahlerup *Women in Political Decision-making*, that argues that women involvement in decision-making on equal footing with men should not only be considered as a matter of justice but also of political change (2001:104f). From the point raised by Dahlerup above, it would be right to argue that women in BEM are not being treated fairly. Alternatively, as one may ask, is the marginalization of women in decision-making a way by men to have authority over the scarce resources in the study area as feminist conflict theorist asserts?

#### **4.5 The Role of Women in the Bawku Chieftaincy Institution**

It seems to appear from the field transcript that in comparison with CI in *Akan* speaking areas where there have been female chiefs with the Queenmother actually nominating who ever becomes the next chief whether male or female (Dankwa 2004:21, 115f). The role of women in the institution of the BC is minimal as my discussions with the CWGB revealed. The women explained that they are organized under the *magazia*<sup>56</sup>, who conveys their hues and cries to the chief. According to them, every community has a *magazia* to enhance easy and more effective mobilization of women. I also noted that Bawku women play a significant role during the installation of a chief. They jubilate and make a lot of noise that seems to form an integral part of the installation process. However, one may ask the importance of noise making during the installation process. The CWGB explained that noise making signifies the general acceptance of the newly elected chief. Further discussions with the group made it clear that only a woman, specifically the sister of the newly elected chief, can carry the *kpanga* (regalia) for the chief and when he dies, it is only she who may carry the *kpanga* back<sup>57</sup>.

In addition to the above, my discussions with individual women in the study community exposed that women play extra roles in the installation process. They explained again that a sister of the newly elected chief brew *pito* for his *enskinment*<sup>58</sup>. In addition, his sister or wife (wives) might accompany the chief to important occasions. My observation also seems to

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<sup>56</sup> It's a Hausa word meaning women leader or organizer

<sup>57</sup> If she dies before the chief other provisions are made for another women to carry the *kpanga* after the death of the chief

<sup>58</sup> Installation of a chief.



prove that the wife of the chief perform major functions as she is the head of the women wing and the mother of all women. The CWGB pointed out that even though women do not take part in decision-making in the institution of the BC, the *magazia* helps in the implementation of decisions.

Giving the roles of women in the institution of the BC as presented above, it seems to appear to me that women are only involved in the initial and ritual aspects of the installation processes and not in actual decision-making. As one go through the field data above, what might come to mind is whether women in BEM will ever have a say in chieftaincy decision-making as those in *Akan* speaking areas.

#### **4.6 The Dual Role of Women in the BEM Conflict**

A discussion with the CWGB made it clear that women in BEM cannot be chiefs and had generally been considered as passive victims of the conflict. Nevertheless, an informant from the Military Security Service insisted that this has not always been the case. In the study community, as in many conflict zones around the world, my observation seems to reveal that women are found in dual contradictory positions in conflicts (USAID 2007, Turshen 1998:1, Skjelsbæk and Smith 2001, Stensrud and Husby 2005). On the one hand, it appears from the field material that the Government of Ghana (GoG), religious bodies and other private organizations had called on the women to negotiate with their husbands, brothers and sons to stop fighting. A minority of women had also been involved in the physical combat or have encouraged their sons, husbands and brothers to keep fighting, on the other hand. Following these seemingly contradictory positions of women regarding the conflict, the question that comes to mind is why some women will encourage their male counterparts to keep fighting and at the same time be considered passive victims of the conflict.

#### **4.7 Impacts of Conflict on Men and Women**

It appears the destructive effect of conflicts on local population is nothing good to write home about. For instance, children, women and men all suffer from the long and short-term effects of conflicts when the social fiber that supports them breaks down. Men, who are generally assumed to be the main perpetrators and combatants in the Bawku conflict, have also suffered

violations of their human rights; have been chased out and fled their homes, have been killed and most of who are the primary targets of murder. Moreover, the field data showed that the recent increase in female-headed households in BEM is also an indication of how vulnerable men are in conflict situations.

Women, on the other hand, have become widows and single mothers, others have been divorced and their businesses have collapsed. The observation also indicates that women have incessantly been at the mercy of armed groups at the classroom, hospital, farms, market places and even their homes. From the above evidence, it must not be wrong to say that both men and women are affected by the conflicts in BEM. However, the crucial question may be on how women are affected differently from men in the BEM conflict. I would argue that men and women are affected differently in the Bawku conflict.

#### **4.7.1 Reasons why Women are Affected Differently from Men in the Bawku Conflict**

From the field transcript, there are two reasons why the conflict in BEM affects men and women differently. Namely, the type of the prevailing conflict and the society's perception on the women. This seems to substantiate the point made by Inger Skjelsbæk, a researcher at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo that "women's experiences in war are determined by the nature of the gender culture in which they live and by the nature of the conflict" (2001:64). In the institution of the BC, only men can become chiefs. Perhaps this is partly why men are observed to have been fighting. They may be fighting as a means of preserving the male dominated chieftaincy, as feminist conflict theorist will point out. On the other hand, my discussions with prominent political figure in BEM also seem to give evidence that men may be fighting to protect the chieftaincy institution from the other ethnic group. In the study locality, women are generally seen as passive victims than perpetrators.

The argument raised by some conflict theorist that men fight to protect women in conflicts situations (Turshen 1998:2) does not always hold in BEM, as there have been cases where men have fled and abandon their wives, sisters and mothers to their faith. Besides, in BEM customary law subject's issues of women to those of men. There are also different interment rituals for men and women: a man is placed on his right hand side, a woman on her left. The informants explained that a man is buried in the grave facing the east because as the sun first rises from the east a man also wakes up first "to open up the compound". A woman, on the

other hand, is buried facing the west because as the sun sets in the west a women also hurries to wash her dishes and calabash (see Rattray 1932:375-397). These traditional perspectives seem to view men as leaders and initiators who are to be out there working while women are to attend to household chores.

From the foregoing analysis, one may observe that conflicts in BEM affect men and women differently. The different attitudes and perceptions about male and female subjects in the studied community may be part of the causes for the observed oppression, marginalization, poverty, poor health care and maltreatment against women in times of chieftaincy conflicts. The field data presented above brings the following question to mind: how could this perceived gender discrimination in Bawku be resolved?

#### **4.8 Direct and Indirect Effects of Conflicts on Women**

Assessing the impacts of conflicts on the selected women would require a clear distinction between *direct* and *indirect* impacts. For Stewart and FitzGerald direct impacts of conflict, equate the immediate consequences of the actions of conflicting parties. This included issues of killing and wounding (2001). The indirect impacts, on the other hand, comprised the “indirect effects on human welfare of war-induced change in economic, social and political life” (quoted in Schindler and Bruck 2007:6). Following this explanation, the issues of rape, famine and destruction of properties in the studied locality could be considered as direct impacts of the conflict while the long-term effects on social infrastructure, migration and employment could be viewed as indirect impacts. From the above it may be said that rural and urban women will not be affected equally by conflicts in BEM.

#### **4.9 Impacts of the BEM Conflicts on Women**

The focus of this section of the chapter is to analysis the effects of conflicts on BEM women. The data used under this section is mainly based on my focus group discussions with the CWGB and interactions with individual women in the municipality.

### ***Effects of Conflict on Women in BEM When their Husbands Die***

In the research area, it was observed that women are culturally designated as caregivers and caretakers of the household. Like other communities in Ghana, male subjects in BEM are generally expected to provide subsistence for the family. What could be the possible implications on the women when their husbands who are supposed to provide subsistence die? It may cause some of them to take up the task of providing subsistence upon their selves. After a departed husband, the bereaved women usually go to their farms without the protection of another male subject. Such women may be more vulnerable to conflict perpetrators when in the farms alone without male subjects.

For the most women interviewed, the lost of a husband has a very significant bearing on their social standing as women. The fieldwork transcript made known that apart from women being subjected to atrocious cultural practices such as compulsory shaving of hair and being locked up alone in the room for days or weeks because of the death of her husband. Widows in BEM become women without a portfolio; dysfunctional, an outcast and a laughing stock in the society. This discrimination against widows in BEM seems to support an earlier observations made by Goldblatt and Meintjes among widows in South Africa (1998:35).

As culture may demands, when a man dies, a brother of the deceased husband may be asked to marry the widow for reasons of continuity. If the widow refuses to marry him, she may loss her main source of livelihood, farmland, right to inheritance and property left behind by the husband. She may be in some cases ejected from the husband's house when her pride-price is paid back to her family<sup>59</sup>. The above information seems to confirm that customary law in the studied community is viewed from the perspective of men, which would collaborate an earlier assertion made by Gierycz that throughout history, government structures and principles of governance have been developed exclusively by men for their own good (refer to page: 52).

### ***Displaced Women in the BEM Conflict***

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report indicates that most refugees and internally displaced persons are women and children (1993:87). This may be due to the risk that women are exposed to in conflict zones. The case of women in the studied area is no exception. It was also observed that many women had fled from BEM because of insecurity and an increased fear of an unexpected attack. This partly may explain why women

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<sup>59</sup> It must be stated here that because of modernity and religion things are changing

and children are the majority of internally displaced persons residing in neighbouring communities of *Salaga* and *Pusiga*. In 2001, there were about 2,500 displaced people from Bawku, most of who were women with their children<sup>60</sup>. Others are said to have travelled as far as to Kumasi and Accra, where they are generally assumed to be living under poor health conditions, exposed to criminals and working as ‘*kayayei*’<sup>61</sup>. Others are believed to have taken refuge in neighbouring countries of Togo and Burkina Faso.

### ***Effects of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) on BEM Women***

According to Stensrud and Husby, GBV can be defined as ‘violence that targets individuals or groups on the basis of their gender’ (2005:3). After reviewing the field material, it was observed that Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) had become a feature of the conflict. However, a discussion with the CWGB revealed that there had not been any report of men being raped. Rape in BEM as was observed seems different from those that occurred in other conflict zones like South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Burundi, where combatants are generally assumed to have used systematic rape as weapon of war, ethnic cleansing to defame the other ethnic group and to motivate combatants to keep fighting (Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998, Turshen 1998:11, Stensrud and Husby 2005).

My discussion with individual women in the municipality revealed that neither *Kusasi* men nor *Mamprusi* men have used rape to prove their superiority over the other ethnic group or as a weapon of fighting. The informant noted that this has been the case because inter-ethnic marriage relations between the *Mamprusi* and the *Kusasi* are common (Lund 2003:591). Could it also be because of strong belief in Islamic piety given that most of the residents in the municipality are said to be Muslims? (refer to page: 33).

From the field transcript, however, rapes in BEM usually occur when law breaks down and some men take advantage of the volatile condition in the area to satisfy their lustful sexual desires. It was generally agreed among the women that most of the rape cases occur during curfew hours. After reviewing the field data on rape issues, what comes to mind is, with an ever-increasing rate in the spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and unwanted pregnancies, how can women protect themselves from this social canker?

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.ghanareview.com/int/bawku.html> accessed on 17th May 2010

<sup>61</sup> A woman who works as a porter

### ***Health Implications of Conflict on BEM Women***

The data from the field material also seems to give evidence that the conflict had brought health problems to women. Many of the women in the municipality showed psychological signs of Traumatic Stress Syndrome (TSS), such as panic and paralyzing fear, shock, mental injury and live in a constant atmosphere of insecurity, which seems similar to TSS observed by De Abreu among women in Mozambique (1998:79). According to the CWGB, a crucial number of the women in the area have developed High Blood Pressure (HBP), while others have died of it. Given the fact on the ground that existing local health services seems ineffective due to the destruction of health infrastructures and scarce health workers, one may rightly see the situation as alarming.<sup>62</sup>

When there is chaos, the hospitals are closed down to prevent health workers from being attacked. A nurse at the Bawku Presbyterian Hospital sited instances where pregnant women have died because of undergoing long hours of labour before getting to the hospital. Such expectant women are said have lack the support of their husbands or other family members either because they have fled for safety or are afraid to violate the government imposed curfew. The situation seems disturbing in view of the fact that the main hospital in BEM is located at *Mamprusi* dominated area making it dangerous for the *Kusasi* people to cross to the *Mamprusi* side to seek health care. Majority of the health workers are also *Kusasis* living in *Kusasi* dominated area. This may have contributed to the deaths of many pregnant women in BEM<sup>63</sup>.

### ***Economic Effects of Conflict on BEM Women***

The data from the fieldwork also indicated that economic activities of women are deeply affected in BEM because of the conflict. The informants suspected that both local and foreign investors feel reluctant to invest in such a volatile area due to the protracted nature of the conflict. It was also noted that most of the vibrant industries in the BEM have been relocated at Bolgatanga or *Zebilla*. This might have contributed to the high unemployment level in the formal sector in the area (Population and Housing Census 2000). Moreover, urban women and farmers claimed it was no long easy for them to bring their products to the markets to sell during market days due to the conflict. This may have contributed to the high level of poverty

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<sup>62</sup> There is only one major hospital, eight clinics and six health centres in Bawku East. With a total number of 51,316 persons per doctor (2000 Population and Housing Census: 89).

<sup>63</sup> It must be pointed out here that *Kusasi* health workers are not contributing to deaths of women in BEM but they form majority of the work force in the major hospital, so when there is conflict these workers cannot go to work because the major hospital in the area is located in the *Mamprusi* dominated territory. This situation has caused lots of deaths of people.

among most women in the municipality as many traders from outside Bawku now send their goods to emerging markets like the *Buzua* and *Zebilla* communities. This situation has forced some women to travel to the major cities of Accra and Kumasi and they are reported to have been working as *Kayayei* or prostitutes.

### ***Effects of Conflicts on Women Education in BEM***

The impact of the BC on women also becomes more evident in the educational cycles. In a society where a male born child rank very high and the female at the bottom and where myths and African traditions have been used to justify why formal education for the male is important than that of the female, the educational situation of women perhaps would be worsened during protracted conflicts. The select municipality has a high rate of illiteracy among women. There is a wide gap between boys and girls enrolment in school. The number of females aged six (6) years and older who have never attended school is said to be 83 percent, which is the highest in the UER (2000 Population and Housing Census: 54). Perhaps this is because when conflict erupts, students stay away from going to school until peace is restored. The field data also showed that there is general fear of being raped among the female students should they attend school during conflict times. This has resulted in instances where some female students have been advised by their parents to be content with informal education at home, arguing that after all the final status of a woman in society remains in the home. One could rightly maintain that such perspective about women's education and social status in the locality requires serious attention in any effort to promote literacy in the area.

#### ***4.10 Summary***

From the preceding analysis it came out that though conflict affects women and men, women seems to have been affected more in the BEM conflict. It was also discovered that the issues of rape, illiteracy, and unemployment are crucial effects of the BEM conflict on women. As was observed, the effects also included lack of efficient health care for women in labour and an increase in number of internally displaced women from BEM to neighbouring towns and villages. These effects of conflict on BEM women seems to buttress my initial hypothesis (refer to page: 20) that the conflict in BEM has had a negative impact on women and may be resolved if women are integrated in to the peace-building processes as we shall see in the section that follow.

#### **4.11 New Role for BEM Women**

My basic argument here is that the BEM conflict seems to propose a new role for the women in the studied community (see Skjelsbæk 2001:60, Turshen 1998:20). From the field transcript, it was noted that women in the studied area have generally been excluded from public decision-making, ownership over land, chieftaincy and politics. They are generally expected to concern their selves with farming and family or household duties. During the field research, however, it was observed that the situation is gradually changing. This may be attributed to the commitment on the part of previous and present GoG on gender issues and practices that discriminate against women by putting in place structures for promoting gender equality.

The 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana abolished discrimination based on gender. In 2001, the GoG established the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWAC). In 2007 also the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) was passed. Furthermore, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has also been abolished. The abolishment of these cultural practices that were mostly targeted on women has given women more freedom and independence. The press freedom in Ghana cannot be left out. From the field experience, it appears that activities of women are now becoming open in the public sphere through the media. This has created new opportunities for women as they can now freely get access to the media and make their activities public.

Another factor that may account for the increasingly role of women in decision-making in recent times may be due to the increased number of female-headed household (2000 Population and Housing Census: 47f)<sup>64</sup>. This seems to be the case because when socio-economic conditions change, women mobilize or are given more space. Women's activities, which, involve more communal task (such as going to markets, fetching firewood, water etc) where they interact with other groups, gives the impetus for interaction and dialogue. This may have liberated women from their traditional patriarchal roles as mothers and wives. Women in BEM have also taken up new jobs in the teaching and health sectors that have made them more enlightened. The above developments in Ghana may have contributed to the involvement of women in issues of conflict resolution and peace-build in BEM. This could be evidence that women are gradually dismantling the patriarchal structures in BEM that confine women to African traditional family and household roles.

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<sup>64</sup> More on new development on gender issues in Ghana can be read from the African Development Fund: Ghana Country Gender Profile, October 2008.



This new role appears to have improved the gender relations between men and women in BEM. At the time of my fieldwork, the Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (IEPC) of Bawku were having a meeting to discuss ways of finding solutions to the conflict, and among them were some members of the CWGB who were expressing their thought and views freely about the conflict and how they think it could be resolved amicably. Would this confirm my opening argument that the BEM conflict appears to suggest new ways of thinking about female subjects in the locality?

#### **4.12 Women and Conflict Resolution in BEM**

This section of the chapter tries to identify the role BEM women could play when it comes to conflict resolution. My discussion will focus on the CWGB. The section as well contains some clarification on the concept *Conflict Resolution*. From my reading of texts on this concept, Conflict Resolution refers to the use of dialogue as a weapon of finding lasting solution to a conflict. (Hopmann 1996, Pruitt 1997, Johnston 2003). My task will also be to discover how the CWGB are engaged in the resolution of the Bawku conflict. In this analysis, conflict resolution would also imply mediation and negotiation.

As was previously noted, women have been considered combatants and victims of conflict in BEM. Women have also served as advocates and forerunners of peace movements to find equitable and stable solutions to the Bawku conflict (see Bouta and Frerks 2002). Perhaps this is because of the failure on the part of stakeholders, traditional courts<sup>65</sup> and other agencies to deal appropriately with the situation for decades. My field data seems to suggest that the CWGB for sometimes now have been playing a pivotal role to find solutions to the conflict and to bring back peace between the *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* people.

#### **4.13 The Concerned Women Group of Bawku (CWGB)**

Some feminist theorist argue that women should be involved in all peace-building processes primarily because of; issues of justice, and different values and conflicting interest between men and women (Dahlerup 2001:105). Others also argue that because of the different ways of socialization, women turn to be more peace-oriented than men are (Salla 2001:68). Yet the

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<sup>65</sup> Traditional courts are most often than not subjected to governmental influence (see pages 45-48 and 49-51).

*essentialist theory* also asserts that women are inherently more peaceful than men are (Reardon 1993:133-141). Azar in “Protracted International Conflicts” pointed out that when a group of people is marginalized for a long time from taking active part in societal decision-making, they tend to come together to revolt against the existing social system ( in Fisher 2001:308). The UNSCR 1325 also empowers women to take active part in conflict resolution processes at the grassroots levels. Could it be that the CWGB, who are organized to find equitable solutions to the existing conflict, are inspired by these feminist thoughts or are they sparked by the protracted conflict theory?

My focused group discussions with members of the CWGB testify that women in BEM are not one group. Age, class, income, education etc generally divide them. Yet it seems as if the conflict in Bawku has united women behind one platform. The CWGB is neutral; made up of both *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* women from various professional backgrounds, which includes mothers for active non-violence, hairdressers association, the market women association, seamstress association, female teachers association and women nurses association. These different positions of women in society according to the CWGB bring different perspectives into peace-building/negotiation.

The women explained that the CWGB serves as an umbrella group for all women organizations in the municipality. They further emphasised that their activities are premised on the basic ideology that there are conflicts everywhere but the most promising way to resolve them is ‘talk-to-talk not gun-to-gun’. The informant could be taking as saying that conflict resolution would likely be fruitful through dialogue. Perhaps their choice for conflict resolution through dialogue has roots in Islamic teachings as most of the women claimed to be Muslims. This then would support Douglas Johnston, the Founder of the International Centre for Religion and Diplomacy, contribution that issues of faith are crucial element in any serious reflection on peace (2003:6ff).

The leadership of the CWGB also asserted that their main aim is to combat the conflict in the municipality through dialogue and non-violence means. The MCE opined during one of my conversations with him that ‘the voice of women are the voice of God. They stay home with the children, especially the youth, so they are the best people to talk to the youth to stop fighting and to restore peace’. The activities of these women, as was noted, includes awareness-raising, networking, lobbying, organizing seminars, workshops and dissemination of information among women, which collaborates what Samuel observed among the

Women's Action Committee (WAC) in Sri Lanka (2001:189). According to the women, these activities date back to the year 2000. The CWGB were happy to say that since 2000, the group has attained some successes (as we will see later) but they also recognized that there is still room for improvement. The group has canvassed support from Action Aid and other non-governmental organizations.

What has kept me thinking since I left the study area is the level of awareness of UNSCR 1325 among the women. My observation seems to prove that most of the women are unaware of the resolution. My concern then has been on how the resolution could be made known to them. Nevertheless, are the activities of the CWGB an indication that women groups may affect conflict society without necessary knowing relevant international convections?

#### **4.14 Roles of CWGB in the Resolution of the Bawku Conflict**

My field transcript shows that the CWGB have taken up a number of roles to help resolve the conflict in the municipality. These roles according to the women range from the grassroot level through interpersonal relationships in the market, farms and other social gathering to public activities in the municipal level that has been captured nation-wide. This section of my research project explores the role of the CWGB in conflict resolution within the context of an ongoing conflict. It is based on my personal observations during my fieldwork and my interactions with members of the CWGB and individual women in the municipality.

##### ***Trust-Building***

According to the women, trust-building and reconciliation is one of the major steps that have been taken to bring peace in their conflict area. The field data also showed that the conflict in BEM has created distrust and suspicion between the *Mamprusi* and *Kusasi* people. This seems to have been passed on from one generation to another through the socialization processes. This may have contributed to the observed intensified stereotype and prejudice between these two conflicting ethnic factions. For instance, when a *Kusasi* person is found dead, the first suspect is a *Mamprusi* person and vice versa. I would agree that such prejudice could lead to wrong suspects since it is possible, for instance, that a *Mamprusi* could kill another *Mamprusi*.

As was revealed by security personnels on the ground, criminals and armed robbers in the municipality have taken advantage of this prejudice and stereotyping to operate. This might

be among the factors why the CWGB have engaged in workshops and seminars to build trust between the *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* people. For them, trust-building is a crucial way to overcome barriers and to establish effective dialogue directed toward conflict resolution in Bawku. The women through their interactions at the market places and other social gatherings have established good relations among themselves. In their meetings, the women claimed to have discussed ways of talking to their brothers, husbands and sons towards trust-building for the promotion of peace in the area. Could this be a confirmation to the argument made by feminist theorists that women through the socialization processes become more peace-oriented than men? (Refer to page: 26). Alternatively, could this buttress the argument made by the essentialists that women are inherently more peaceful than men are? (Refer to Skjelsbæk 2001:48-50).

My discussions with the CWGB also revealed that as at the year 2007-2008, *Kusasi* people could not cross to the *Mamprusi* dominated area and vice versa. This could be problematic because the only major hospital in the municipality is located at the *Mamprusi* dominated area (refer page: 61). Moreover, the only way for the *Mamprusi* people to cross to southern Ghana and other places (Wa and Tamale) is through the *Kusasi* dominated area. The CWGB claimed to have built trust and confidence, through interactions with their husbands, brothers and sons, between these ethnic groups. They further revealed that *Mamprusi* and *Kusasi* people could now freely access either's territory. The women claimed to have been agents of peace, advising their male counterparts, especially the youth, to be mindful of speculations about the other ethnic group that are meant to create tension and social unrest. Through trust building, the CWGB seems to have, on temporary basis though, calmed the situation at Bawku and have as well made movement safer for the conflicting groups in the region. It seems to me that trust-building among the conflicting ethnic factions is a useful approach towards peace-building in the municipality.

### ***Peaceful Demonstrations***

The CWGB made it known during my focused group interviews with them that they have organized a number of public campaigns in the form of demonstrations to protest against the incremental violation of their human rights in BEM. The women asserted that these demonstrations are meant to express their dissatisfaction about the present situation in Bawku. My field data seems to confirm that their demonstrations give opportunity for the *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* people to fight a common enemy together: conflict. The CWGB explained that

these demonstrations are organized in collaboration with the Bawku East Development Association (BEDA) and other non-governmental organizations (NGO's) supported by the Bawku Municipal Assembly (BMA). The women in BEM pointed out that in July 2008 and June 2009 the CWGB organized demonstrations and carried placards with slogans 'Give peace a chance; children and women are suffering, peace is what we need, no peace no development, conflict destroys, let's build bridges across ethnic lines, people of Bawku our greatest enemy is poverty'.

In a petition to the MCE during one of such demonstrations, the secretary of the CWGB lamented on the plights of women in the conflict and on the failure on the part of past and present governments and other non-state actors to restore calm. These lamented failures might have motivated the CWGB in acting together to find possible solutions to the conflict. This analysis seems to authenticate the observation made by Dahlerup that women have potential for change (2001:105). For instance, the secretary claimed to have condemned the conflict and the recent murder of women and children and as well called on the conflicting ethnic factions to embrace peace. She further claimed to have advocated for respect for human rights. The studied women have as well petitioned to the MCE for a concerted effort in resolving the conflict, threatening to withdraw their services in the homes and community at large in case of non-adherence.

Women were observed to have continually stressed on mouth-to-mouth means of resolving conflict to armed confrontations. It was observed that these demonstrations have helped to calm the conflict, evidenced by media reports on these petitions and demonstrations. The Ghanaian media seems to have raised awareness on the conflicting factions and the women demonstration groups. It can be hoped that government and the security services will respond timely to intensify security on the ground and the protection of women in such situations. Through the demonstrations, government has attempted at given nurses, teachers, doctors etc on the ground the required support. For instance, the nurses most of who are women now have special crest, distinguishing them from other people during curfew. Could it be that the demonstrations by the CWGB form part of the reasons why the leaders of the conflicting parties are negotiating for peace?

In the final analysis, the field material does not show any solid evidence to conclude that the studied women in these peaceful demonstrations are inspired by UNSCR 1325. Their

inspiration appears to be related to their vulnerability in the conflict and their quest for a democratic society where women's rights are respected (refer to page 58-62).

### ***Sports***

Organizing sporting activities between the *Kusasis* and the *Mamprusis* by the CWGB is one of the peace-building and conflict resolution instruments developed by the women. These sporting activities take the form of a win-win approach than the usual win-lose approach in competitive sporting events. Example, in their football games the women makes sure that each team has the complement of *Mamprusi* and *Kusasi* players. Games that will demand purely *Kusasi* or *Mamprusi* players are avoided. Through sports, the women hope to promote tolerance between the combating youths. As one respondent asserted in my conversation with her, "until the youth appreciate how to live in peace, the conflict will not be resolved".

By shaking hands after each event, eating, drinking together, and talking with the other group, sporting events are intended to build confidence among the groups. Speeches normally given by members of the CWGB at the end of the sporting activities are purposely meant to conscientize the youth that their society can progress meaningfully through unity, peace and forgiveness. Given the nominal high interest in soccer among Ghanaians in general, it is possible to assume that the sporting events by the CWGB could work effectively for restoring peace in the area. Using sports as a way of resolving conflict seems to confirm an earlier observation made by Dahlerup, that men and women have different values and conflict interest toward resolving conflicts.

### ***Employment Opportunities***

The CWGB have also focused on the provision of employment opportunities for the youth as a major way of resolving the Bawku conflict in BEM. This conflict resolution mechanism adopted by the CWGB may validate the argument by Stensrud and Husby that conflicts can be solved indirectly through economic activities (2005:8). During my interactions with the women, they were worried that most of the youth involved in the conflict are unemployed and that unemployment seems to be a factor for the youth involvement in violence. What the women told me confirms an observation made by Brukum that the conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana have led to the militarization of the youth (2007:99). However, what comes to mind after reading the above data is how it could relate to the "Greed and Grievance theory" that lack of employment opportunities especially among the youth spark them to

engage in rebellion. According to Collier, the presence of unemployment among the uneducated youth increases the propensity of a county to experience conflicts. He further asserted that

“the willingness of young men (and women)<sup>66</sup> to join a rebellion might be influenced by income-earning opportunities. If the young men (and women) face only poverty, they might be more inclined to join a rebellion than if they have better (employment) opportunities” (2001:94).

The above theory seems to support the claim made by the CWGB that employment among the youth could help in the peace-building processes. The women therefore claimed to have concentrated on the provision of vocational opportunities for the youth who are not able to enrol into Junior High and Senior High schools. It includes; dressmaking, painting, carpentry, and decoration, farming and the provision of initial capital for the youth who wish to set up their own businesses. These vocations are hoped to provide a brighter future for the youth and a conflict free Bawku. It was observed that this strategy adopted by the CWGB is on track and most of the youth in the municipality are now engaged in one vocation or another. This strategy may help to resolve the existing conflict situation. It may also promote friendly relations between the *Mamprusi* and *Kusasi* youths who are engaged in the same vocation training.

Does the above analysis illustrate the African adage that “the devil finds work for the idle hand”? It seems the studied women would not object to this adage given that they identified unemployment as a reason for youth involvement in the existing violent conflict.

### ***Organizing Seminars and Workshops***

The transcript showed that the CWGB have organized a number of seminars and workshops in the municipality directed towards addressing issues of ethnic polarization. The seminars focus on the effects of conflicts and the need for tolerance. They also talk about forgiveness and reconciliation as key resource for development. Religious leaders, mostly Imams and Pastors are also invited to these workshops. They use these seminars and workshops to preach diversity and harmony in God’s creation to their *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* audience. These religious leaders are said to base their preaching on two themes: love your neighbour as

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<sup>66</sup> My emphasis

yourself and do unto others, as you will have them do unto you. The above data may relate to the proposal for ‘faith-based diplomacy’.

According to Douglas Johnston, faith-based diplomacy engages both religious and political leaders for conflict resolution (2003). Johnston debated that faith-based diplomacy ‘speaks to the heart, mind, and spirit of the combatants – to those things that they hold most dear – not simply to the material or intellectual issues that dominant the practice of realpolitik’ (2003:Foreword). In that sense, the Pastors and the Imams at the seminars could be viewed as invoking those religious principles of love and neighbourhood as tools for resolving differences. These seminars and workshops are meant to educate the youth on the effects of conflict on the individual, family and society. Through these seminars, it is possible that the women could eventually help to restore peace between the two ethnic groups.

#### ***4.15 Summary***

This section of the chapter has focused on the role BEM women are playing in the resolution of the Bawku conflict. It was found out that trust-building, sports, peaceful demonstrations, provision of employment opportunities for the youth and organization of seminars and workshops are the main conflict resolution instruments that had been adopted by the women in BEM. Nevertheless, I observed that the roles undertaken by the CWGB is an on-going process and there is room for improvement. Findings from the section seem to contradict an earlier observation made by Mpoumou among women in Dr. Congo who were motivated by international conventions and policy guidelines (refer to page: 53). Resolution 1325 is virtually known among women in BEM.

The women may have been organised to address their victimization<sup>67</sup> in BEM as has been pointed out by Gierycz and Samuel (refer to page: 53). It also seems from the field data that the women have become involved in conflict resolution because of changed economic conditions (refer to page 61f). Perhaps the CWGB will be more effective if its members are educated to become more aware of the UNSCR 1325 and 1889. Despite the said need for improvement, it can be concluded from the forgoing analysis that the women have helped brought relative peace to the area. The security situation in the area also seems to have improved through the activities of these women. A good portion of the youth are also said to be employed or acquired vocational skills. However, it must be stated that generally these peace-building efforts of the CWGB are undermined by the protracted conflicts in BEM.

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<sup>67</sup> Women are targeted directly and killed in the conflict.



#### **4.16 Conclusion of Chapter**

This chapter has examined two interrelated parts of my research project. The first section of the chapter focused on the women situation in Bawku. Findings from this section indicated that culture and African tradition limits women participation in decision-making in BEM. It came out that even though the conflict in Bawku, affect both men and women, women seem to be affected differently because of the type of the prevailing conflict and the society's perception on women. The section also showed that the conflict have direct and indirect effects on women. In the final analysis, it was recognized that issues of rape, education, displacement and employment are crucial effects of the conflict in BEM on women. It was also observed that the effect also include lack of efficient health care for women in labour. The section seems to support my initial thesis that the conflict in BEM has had a negative on women, and may be resolved if women are integrated into the conflict resolution processes.

The second section of the chapter also gave indications that the conflict in BEM has created a new opportunity for women to participate in conflict resolution processes. This was attributed partly to the commitment of both past and present GoG to promote gender equality issues. The section as well focused on the role of the CWGB in the resolution of the BEM conflict. It was identified that trust-building, sports, peaceful demonstrations, provisions of employment for the youth and seminars are ways through which the women in BEM seeks to combat conflict. It was also observed under this section that Resolution 1325 is unknown to most women in BEM. It can be hoped that the CWGB will be more effective if the resolution is incorporated into legislature at the Regional level and made known to women at the grassroot level through education.

## 5.0 Conclusion

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises two main sections. The first section discusses the future prospects of peace-building in the BEM, concentrating on the information gathered from respondents during interviews, administration of questionnaires, focus group discussions and participant observation. This involves a discussion of workable guidelines based on the empirical findings. The second section deals with a summary of what lessons have been learnt from the study.

### 5.2 Future Prospects of Peace in BEM

A portion of the respondents suggested that the factions involved in the conflict should be left without any intervention to settle their difference. This was also a view held by Luttwak when he wrote that

“An unpleasant truth often overlooked is that although war is a great evil, it does have a great virtue: it can resolve political conflicts and lead to peace. This can happen when all belligerents become exhausted or when one wins decisively. Either way, the key is that the fighting must continue until a resolution is reached. War brings peace only after passing a culminating phase of violence” (1999:36).

Other respondents also suggested that dialogue was the best way to help resolve the conflict. These respondents argued that both *Kusasi* and *Mamprusi* leaders should be dragged to the dialogue table by a higher authority. They stressed that the “mouth” is a key weapon on itself to bring peace.

Some respondents also suggested that, the patriarchal and patrilineal culture in the BEM is the major underlying factor contributing to most of the sources conflict. These respondents suggested that there should be some changes in the institution of chieftaincy in the municipality, allowing women to become chiefs as it is done in southern Ghana. Yet other respondents also suggested that for the CWGB to be more effective, its activities should not be confined to the municipality. They stressed that the group should team up with other women’s group at the national level to make the group more vibrant. This opinion by my respondents may confirm the claim by Turshen and Twagiramariya that women groups should team up to resolve conflicts (refer to page: 17).

During the fieldwork in the studied community, it was found that two major instruments to a successful negotiation by a third party were lacking in the municipality: the two parties involved in the conflict, thus the *Kusasis* and the *Mamprusis*, were as at the time of the study not in a mutually hurting stalemates and hence have not seen a mutually enticing opportunity to resolve the conflict (Touval and Zartman quoted in Hopmann 1996:222). It could be hoped that the CWGB would work on this to find a ripe moment (Pruitt 1997) when both parties are willing to negotiate peace and capitalize on that moment to install the sense of peace in the combatants.

One would suggest that the spoiler problem must be dealt with if peace is to come to Bawku. Stedman pointed out that “spoilers are leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interest, and use violence to undermine attempts to bring peace” (1997:5). In that case, a possible peace in the studied area will involve the identification of the internal spoilers in the conflict. The analysis of the field data evidenced that the CWGB are concentrating too much on the youth (refer to pages: 66-71) without investigating on those “spoilers” who engineer the youth into combat. It is possible therefore to suggest that the leaders/spoilers of the ethnic groups who perpetuate conflict would be identified and included in the peace-building process.

As the study also revealed, Resolution 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009) is virtually unknown among most women in the BEM. In that context, one would propose that there should be a massive public campaign/education at the grassroot level to bring the essence of these resolutions to the women. This would enlighten them on the power that the Resolution invests in them for conflict resolution.

It may also be recommended that, there should be fair and equitable distribution of land in BEM, since land was observed as a major factor in the conflict (refer to pages: 42-44). A way around this problem could be that the Traditional Council, RNHC will be given greater autonomy to distribute resources equitably in places where there are conflicts.

The study further suggests an election and recognition of separate Paramount chiefs for the two conflicting ethnic groups. This appears crucial since the earlier analysis illustrated that the conflict under studies borders on crisis relating to paramount chief (refer to page: 36f).

The previous data interpretations also established that the politicisation of the BC is a major source of conflict in the municipality (refer to pages: 45-48, 49-51). This would imply that

any attempt at the resolution of the conflict would take seriously the discouragement of political leaders /influence in the process (refer to Lund on page: 18), giving space for neutral parties, such the CWGB in the peace process. This may require the empowerment of women at the grassroot level by the RNHC, the government, other political parties and NGO. Women groups would require provision of the necessary logistics to be effective in such process. Women may equally be empowered should the gender equality issues (refer to page: 63) being pursued by the GoG be informed by traditional institutions. This could lead to women's participation in chieftaincy. For instance, government gender policy may encourage the admittance of women into the RNHC.

One would further suggest that the CWGB should advocate for the effective implementation of the Interstate Succession Law 1985 (PNDCL 111) at the local level. This Law gives women the right to inherit directly from their deceased husbands. By doing so women will get access to land and other properties left behind by their departed husbands. This could help integrate back into society women who are internally displaced and refugees, while they are provided with houses and farm lands to restart life.

The field findings may suggest that there should be trauma counseling for women in BEM as it was reported earlier that some of the women experience psychological stress due to the conflict (refer to page: 61). This suggestion will buttress an observation made by De Abreu that conflict have long-term effects on women even when peace is restored (refer to page: 17). One would also propose for a reconciliation committee which would allow people to express their grievances and worries, aimed at forgiving each other and living in an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance free from the observed "we and they" stereotypes and prejudices (refer to pages: 38, 40f, 47).

It is also recommended that a permanent military barracks would be set up at Bawku. In that way, the conditions of the security personnels at the BEM could be improved. When provided with better accommodations, improved wages and salaries, the security personnels at the barracks would be psychologically and emotionally prepared for the task ahead of them.

It appears that the Ghanaian media require some level of media professionalism in their reportage on the conflict, as most of the respondents asserted that the continual rise in the conflict is partly as a result of false information the media publicize (refer to pages: 48f). As has been observed by Hoijer and others, the media could be a great weapon of peace and should be utilized for that purpose instead of spreading propaganda at this conflict area.

### **5.3 What Lessons Have Been Learnt?**

The study has been an attempt to contribute to existing knowledge on the role women can play in peace-building and conflict resolution at the grassroots level. I have attempted an investigation into the role that chieftaincy play in conflicts in Ghana (BEM) but focused on the impacts of chieftaincy conflicts on women and the role women can play in peace-building. The study was conducted in a patriarchal society, however, one may say that if the study had involved a comparison between a matrilineal and a patrilineal society in Ghana the data might have been richer. However, the stipulated time period for the fieldwork for the master's degree programme was one of the reasons why I concentrated on only one society (patrilineal society). It can be hoped that future research into women and CCR will take this into consideration.

In chapter one, it was noticed that even though it is generally assumed that Ghana is one of the most peaceful countries on the African continent, the country has witnessed economic, political and chieftaincy crisis for the past decades. It was observed that in spite of the efforts both internationally and locally to increase the participation of women in peace-building, the institution of chieftaincy remains a hindrance to this. Methodological issues, problems, relevance of the study and the institution of chieftaincy in Africa were also discussed under the chapter. The chapter also provided evidence on how women are affected differently from men in conflicts and the need to involve women in peace-building efforts.

Chapter two basically provided an overview of the general conditions in the studied community. In the chapter that followed, it was observed that even though the conflict in the studied community is primarily about chieftaincy, its remote and immediate causes are numerous. Political influence on chieftaincy, colonial past, media influence, celebration of festivals and land disputes came out as causes of conflicts in BEM. It came out that the conflict has also lead to the militarization of the youth and the use of high-tech weaponry.

In chapter four, the analysis uncovered that women are deliberately targeted and killed in the conflict, a situation which is recent. The study also found out that traditional perspective in the studied community limits women's active participation in decision-making including chieftaincy issues. Women only play a minimal role in the Bawku chieftaincy institution. The chapter revealed further that women are affected differently from men in the BEM conflict because of the type of prevailing conflict and the society's perception on women. A finding from the study indicated that women have been affected negatively by the BCC. The health

condition of women was observed to be alarming. The chapter also indicated that the conflict in Bawku has affected the literacy level of women and young girls. It was also discovered that there have been emerging markets in the *Zebilla* and *Buzua* communities. This was a factor for the low patronage in economic activities in BEM, leading to unemployment and poverty among the women. The chapter also discovered that the conflict has also created female-headed household in the studied community.

The study also gave evidence that women are not a threat to security in Bawku. It is also evidenced in the chapter that the conflict in BEM has given the women new roles. The deduction was that women are gradually dismantling patriarchal structures that confine them to private sphere of life. The research further disclosed that women in BEM are combating conflict without much knowledge on international conventions. The study discovered also that the CWGB is also at its infancy and lack active grassroots participation. It also lacks the necessary logistics. It came out from the study that the women are using sports, demonstration, employment, trust-building and seminars to combat the Bawku conflict.

The last chapter of my research project concentrated on the future prospects of peace in BEM and the lessons that have been learnt from the study. In fine, it can be said that the conflict in BEM has affected women negatively and even though there is an effort by women to resolve the conflict, there is more room for improvement.

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