

“HE WHO GIVES POWER TAKES AWAY POWER”:
THE ROLE OF THE OHEMAA IN AKAN CHIEFTANCY

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Abstract: *The institution of chieftaincy is a revered one and various actors ensure that its sanctity is preserved and protected. One of such actors is the Ohemaa, who is considered a co-ruler with the Ohene. In the processes of making an Akan chief, the Ohemaa has the sole prerogative to nominate a royal to be enstooled as a chief. In the event of destoolment, what is the role of the Ohemaa? This forms the focus of the paper. Documentary sources and interviews were used as the means of data collection. Citing examples from the Assin and other Akan societies, the paper discusses the roles various actors play in the enstoolment and destoolment processes of an Akan chief. The paper argues that the Ohemaa, though has the power to nominate a chief, she cannot on her own authority destool the chief. It is the contention of this paper that the people who have the power to destool a chief are those who gave the chief the power to sit on the stool of his ancestors. These are the kingmaker and not the Ohemaa.*

Key Words: Akan; Chief; Destoolment; Enstoolment; *Ohemaa*.

Introduction

The chieftaincy institution has become the most enduring institution in Ghana. The enduring nature of the institution is seen in how it has been able to survive through the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Furthermore, the ability to deal with military and civilian democratic regimes of Ghana adds to its enduring nature.¹ Chiefs were instrumental in the indirect rule system of the colonial government. They became the main instruments through which the British ruled their colonies.² The resilience of the chieftaincy institution is again seen in the number of royals who are clamouring to be made chiefs in

¹ I. Owusu-Mensah, W. Asante and W. K. Osew, “Queen Mother: Unseen hands in chieftaincy conflicts among the Akan in Ghana: Myth or reality,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 8, no. 6 (2015): 1-16.

² Nana Arhin Brempong, “Chieftaincy, an Overview,” in *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development*, eds. Irene Odotei and Albert K. Awedoba (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers), 27-41.

their communities.³ This clamour by royals to be made chiefs has in some instances, led to disputations. A lot of these disputations has arisen as a result of the actions of some kingmakers to destool the incumbent chiefs for several reasons. The role of some kingmakers in fomenting disputes by their attempts to destool chiefs have been well documented.⁴

Various actors have been recognised to be part of the group of persons fomenting the endless disputes that have characterised the chieftaincy institution. Where there is unanimity in the resolve of the Kingmakers to destool a chief, the action has always been with less rancour. Where there is a split among the Kingmakers, there has always been infighting and resistance among the Kingmakers leading to disputes and in some cases loss of lives and properties. In a recent case involving the Nsoatre stool, Nana Asi Kwasi, Nana Baffour Awuah and some sub-chiefs held a press conference at Nsoatre to announce the destoolment of the Paramount Chief, after preferring charges against him.

This move was resisted by other chiefs who took side with the Paramount Chief.⁵ One person that has not been discussed in the literature when destoolment disputes are being discussed is the Ohemaa. The Ohemaa is very central to the whole process of enstooling a new chief in her community. She is the one who must first nominate a royal and present him to the Kingmakers to be enstooled as a chief after the kingmakers are satisfied with the choice. If the Ohemaa is central to the enstoolment of a Chief, what role does she play then if that chief is to be destooled?

The paper analysis the position of the Ohemaa in the Akan state and her role in the making of the chief in the Akan state as well as her role in the destoolment of the Chief. Even though the paper focuses on the

³ Anamzoya Sulemana Alhassan and Steve Tonah, "If you Don't Have Money Why Do you Want to Be a Chief? An Analysis of the Commercialisation of Justice in the Houses of Chiefs in Ghana," *Ghana Social Science Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010), 1-13.

⁴ Nuhu Atteh and Steve Tonah, "Chieftaincy in a Peri-Urban Community: The case of Bortianor, Greater Accra Region," in *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana*, ed. Steve Tonah (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 149-168; Alhassan Sulemana Anamzoya and Steve Tonah, "Chieftaincy Succession Dispute in Nanum, Northern Ghana: Interrogating the Narratives of Contestants," *Ghana Journal of Geography* 4 (2012), 83-102.

⁵ Ghanaweb, "Tension Mounts at Nsoatre over Chieftaincy Dispute," February 24, 2014; <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Tension-mounts-at-Nsoatre-over-chieftaincy-dispute-301634>

Assin, where needful, examples will be cited from other Akan states to buttress my argument. It situates the role of the Ohemaa in the destoolment processes within the context of the customary powers to enstool and destool a Chief. Finally, it concludes with the assertion that although the Ohemaa has the customary right to nominate a royal for the Kingmakers to enstool, she has no such powers to destool the chief alone without the consent and support of the Kingmakers.

This paper employed the phenomenological method in the data collection. Phenomenological studies allow a researcher to bracket common sense beliefs while focusing reflectively on the phenomena of experience, analysing the traits of the phenomena and their implications and reporting the results to others for further confirmation or disconfirmation.⁶ The method was important in getting the data for the paper. The primary data used were sourced from interviews with some key players in the enstoolment processes of the Assin during my field work. Secondary data were used to augment the primary data for the paper.

The Assin of Ghana

The Assin belong to the Akan ethnic group. They are found in the forest belt of the Central Region of Ghana. The Assin constitute the second largest ethnic group in the Central Region of Ghana. Administratively, the Assin is divided into three, the Assin North District, Assin Fosu Municipality and Assin South District with a combine population of 165,585.⁷ Matrilineal descent remains the basis for Assin social organization. Every individual belongs to the mother's clan, which is one of seven clans; and marriage is exogamous. All successions are matrilineal, including those who are qualified to occupy the stool of the Ohemaa or Chief in every town. Individuals, who are members of the royal family in every town are descended through the lineage of their mother like all other Assin and trace their identity to an early ancestress.

⁶ S.B. Twiss and W.H. Conser Jr. (Eds.), *Experience of the Sacred: Readings in the Phenomenology of Religion* (London, UK: University Press of New England, 1992)

⁷ Ghana Statistical Service, *Population and Housing Census* (2014); <https://statsghana.gov.gh/gsspublications.php?category=OTc2NDgyNTUzLjkzMDU=/webstats/p9r0796n5o>

and authority.¹¹ The Ohemaa having her own stool means that she has her own power, that she holds her office on the basis of her own qualifications.¹²

The Ohemaa may biologically be the mother, sister, grandmother or niece of the Ohene (Chief). When a stool of the Ohemaa becomes vacant it was the responsibility of the Chief to select a royal to sit on the vacant Ohemaa stool.¹³ The *Ohemaa* stool has been described by Rattray as the *okonua panyin*, senior stool.¹⁴ The Ohemaa is so important that she was the only one who could keep the Chief waiting and also, can publicly rebuke the Chief.¹⁵ The position of the Ohemaa in the Akan social structure makes her an important player in the succession to a vacant stool.

Brempong argues that the composite nature of the Akan matrilineage lay not in its segmentation over time and space, but in the incorporation into it of stranger segments which in time became concealed; even when it was known, it was not permitted for outsiders to point it out. These stranger elements could be descendants of slaves or women outside the lineage who were not eligible for the stool. It was the Ohemaa who could pronounce on the fitness of potential successors of the stool from the viewpoint of true descent from the founding ancestors and ancestresses.¹⁶

The Ohemaa also has a major role to play in the administration of the state. In the event of a vacancy to the male stool, the Ohemaa was customarily required to nominate a royal to sit on the male stool.¹⁷ She is clothed with that power to nominate because she is believed to have a good knowledge of the royals eligible to sit on the stool.¹⁸ The Ohemaa stool is again important because in some circumstances when

¹¹ Vincent Assanful, “The Obaahemaa’s Stool: A Symbol of Political and Religious Authority in an Akan State,” *Oguaa Journal of Religion and Human Values*, 2 (2012): 75-85.

¹² Beverly J. Stoeltje, “Asante Queenmothers: A Study in Female Authority,” *ANNALS; New York Academy of Sciences* 810, no. 1 (1997), 41-71.

¹³ Takyiwaa Manuh, “The Asantehemaa’s Court and its Jurisdiction over Women: A Study in Legal Pluralism,” *Research Review*, 4 no. 2 (1988), 50-66.

¹⁴ R.S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 81

¹⁵ Rattray, *Ashanti*, 82

¹⁶ Brempong, “Chieftaincy,” 127.

¹⁷ Rattray, *Ashanti*, 82; Manuh, “Asantehemaa Court,” 54

¹⁸ Irene K. Odotei, “Women in the Corridors of Power,” in *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development*, eds. Irene Odotei and Albert K. Awedoba (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers), 81-100.

the male stool is vacant and there is no immediate male replacement, the Ohemaa can assume the role of Omanhene until such a time that a substantive male royal is nominated and enstooled to sit on the stool of his ancestor.

Two of such Ahemaa, Dokua of Akim Abuakwa and Juaben Serwah of Juaben, occupied the male stools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively.¹⁹ Currently in the Assin Afutuakwa Traditional Area, the Omanhemaa, Nana Afransie IV is acting as the Omanhene since no replacement has been chosen to replace the former Omanhene who passed to join his ancestors.²⁰

The Ohemaa is considered as the key advisor to the chief. The chief cannot take any major decision without consulting the Ohemaa and the elders of the community. Aside her role of advising the chief, the Ohemaa has other roles she plays in the Akan society. As the leader of the women in the community it was her duty to see to their wellbeing. Socially, it was her duty to ensure that young girls were taken through the puberty rituals when they experience their menarche. She also sees to the settlement of domestic quarrels and marital disputes.²¹ In a discussion with the *Omanhemaa* of Assin Attandasu Traditional Area, Nana Abena Gyamfua II, she intimated that she has no formal court to handle cases in her traditional area and such cases that should necessarily had come to her court are being handled by the *Omanhene's* court.

Economically, the *Ohemaa* is responsible for the markets in her traditional area. The market queens report to her and ensure that the markets function to their optimum best.²² Religiously, the *Ohemaa* is responsible for the preparation of the sacred meals and the feeding of the ancestral spirits during festivals.²³ Politically, the *Ohemaa* does not only sit as equal to the *Ohene* (Chief) but is the only one who has the power to nominate a royal to occupy the stool of his ancestors.²⁴ As a member of the Traditional Council, the Ohemaa gets the

¹⁹ Brempong, "Transformations in Traditional Rule," 129.

²⁰ Assanful, "The Role of the Indigenous Assin."

²¹ Manuh, "Asantehemaa's Court," 55.

²² Manuh, "Asantehemaa's Court," 57.

²³ Assanful, "The Obaahemaa's Stool," 83.

²⁴ Arhin Brempong, *Transformations in Traditional Rule in Ghana (1951-1996)* (Accra: Institute of African Studies, 2007).

opportunity to take part in deliberations concerning the welfare of the community. The Ohemaa uses her position in the society to contribute significantly to the progress of her society.²⁵ In the political sphere of the Akan society, the Ohemaa is pivotal in the selection of a new chief when the stool becomes vacant as a result of death, destoolment or abdication by the previous chief.

The Ohemaa and the Enstoolment of a Chief

In the nomination and enstoolment of an Assin chief, the *Ohemaa* is instrumental in ensuring that the right person is nominated and enstooled as the chief.²⁶ The role of the Ohemaa in the making of a chief is grounded in an Akan saying, *Obaa na wo Ohene*, “it is the woman that gave birth to the chief.” The processes of enstoolment of a chief is similar among the Akan tribes, with just little variations. Among the people of Assin Attandasu Traditional Area,²⁷ only those who hail from the Royal Assinie Family are eligible to ascend to the Omanhene’s stool. The process of nominating a new Omanhene are described by a respondent, a former Abusuapanin of the Royal Assinie family as follows:

When the chief dies, the Ohemaa, Abusuapanin and some few elderly women meet and deliberate on which of the royals is to be nominated as a chief. When the choice is made, as the *Abusuapanin* I inform the *Gyaase* of the decision. I then present the candidate to the *Gyaase* and if he is accepted by the *Gyaase*, then the preparation for his enstoolment is put in place. The Assin state would meet and the candidate would be carried by the *Asafo* group and paraded around to meet the chiefs and formally introduced as the new chief of the traditional area. Then he is confined for one week where he is taught all the customs and traditions of the stool. After the one-week confinement, he is paraded again in town.²⁸

²⁵ Beverly J. Stoeltje, “Asante Queenmothers: A Study in Identity and Continuity,” *Journal of Theatricalities and Visual Arts* 5 (2012); https://www.academia.edu/7790416/Stoeltje_Beverly_J._Asante_Queenmothers_A_Study_In_Identity_And_Continuity_

²⁶ Assanful, “The Obaahemaa’s Stool,” 79; S.Y Bimpong-Buta, “The Role of Queens in Enstooling and Destooling of a Chief,” *Daily Graphic* 2012, 7.

²⁷ Assin Attandasu Traditional Area is one of the four traditional areas that make up the Assin

²⁸ Personal communication with the late Abusuapanin Kwesi Ntsiful at Nyankumasi Ahenkro, 2016.

Another respondent expressed a similar view. He noted that on the death of the chief, the Abusuapanin is formally informed by the State and asked to appoint one of the royals to occupy the vacant stool. The Abusuapanin then goes to the Ohemaa, who is customarily considered as the mother of the stool for a nominee, to request for a new chief. When the state council meets, the Abusuapanin presents the nominee to the Council saying, “this is the royal that the Ohemaa has nominated for us.”²⁹

The views expressed above point to the central role of the Ohemaa in the nomination process. She alone is customarily qualified to nominate a royal to occupy a vacant stool. Any choice would be customarily void if it did not have the blessing of the Ohemaa. This view was confirmed in a Supreme Court ruling on the Wenchi chieftaincy succession dispute. In that ruling, the Supreme Court averred that it was only the Ohemaa who had the capacity to make nominations and any other person who makes such nominations without the consent of the Ohemaa renders such nomination void.³⁰

The views expressed also show that the process of nomination is done in a consultative manner. This consultation is important if the royal so chosen is to be accepted. In the election and enstoolment of Otumfuo Osei Tutu II as the Asantehene, this consultative process was adhered to. When the Asantehemaa nominated him, the Gyaase presented him before the Kumasi Traditional Council, who after deliberations accepted the nomination.

The next level of consultation was at the Asanteman Council, where his nomination to the position of Asanteheene was finally approved before he was then enstooled.³¹ The deliberative nature of the enstoolment process points to the fact that in the Akan societies, a Chief is never imposed on the community. This view has been confirmed by Gyekye and Arhin.³²

²⁹ Personal communication with Abusuapanin Kwame Affum of Assin Ochiso, 2016.

³⁰ Bimpong-Buta, “The Role of Queens,” 7

³¹ Irene Odotei and George P. Hagan, *The King Returns* (Legon, Institute of African Studies, 2002).

³² Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Kwame Arhin, *Traditional Rule in Ghana: Past and Present* (Accra: Sedco Publishing, 1985).

The role of the Ohemaa in the process ends at the nomination stage. When she makes the nomination, and it is accepted by the *Gyaase*, the rest of the processes are taken over by the Abusuapanin and the King-makers. The actual enstoolment of the Chief takes place in the stool room where the chief-elect is seated on the stool of his ancestors. Nana Afikurah III of Assin Kumasi commenting on the stool room rituals noted:

As part of the enstoolment rites, around midnight all the elders meet and perform a particular custom before you are enstooled. What happens is that an animal is slaughtered at midnight. You are first sent to the river for a ritual bath before you are brought to the stool room. We then light a fire and cook the meat. The new chief is given a particular part of the meat. At dawn you will be presented to the *Oman*, state.³³

After the nomination and enstoolment of a chief, it is the duty of the Ohemaa to advise the chief to carry out his function properly. By Akan customs and practices, the Ohemaa is the only person who has the right to publicly rebuke her chief if he is not doing the right thing. If an Ohemaa reneges on her customary duty of advising the chief, she could be destooled.

In the next section, the role of the Ohemaa would be evaluated to establish whether she is the one who has the sole prerogative to destool a chief or that right customarily is exercised by another body. If the Ohemaa is central to the enstoolment of a chief, what is her position in the destoolment of the chief?

The Ohemaa and Destoolment of an Akan Chief

In the Assin community no chief is enstooled for life. A Chief is entitled to sit on the stool of his ancestors so long as he does the bidding of his ancestors. This means upholding the dictates of the oath of office he swears before the ancestors and the *Oman*, Nation. The oath is a promise by the new chief to his superiors and subordinates that he

³³ Personal communication with Nana Afikurah III of Assin Kumasi, 2006.

will provide unwavering moral, human, and material support whenever he is called to do so.³⁴

A chief who goes contrary to the will and dictates of his revered ancestors would be liable for destoolment. Destoolment has been used by the indigenous people as a means to check a chief's violation of his oath of office.³⁵ In my interaction with key interlocutors in the study area, various reasons were given for the destoolment of a chief. Among the many reasons given were the chief's refusal to allow the stool room rituals to be performed, refusal to celebrate the annual festival of the community without any justifiable reason, breaking of taboos surrounding his stool, failure to bring development to his community, failure to account for stool properties such as land that has been sold among others. A respondent in an interview made the following observations that could lead to the destoolment of a chief. He remarked:

Immediately you are enstooled people would start assessing your conduct on the stool. Whatever you do the people would be noting. If for example, you promise the Oman that when you get enstooled you will live in the chief's palace (*Ahenfie*) but neglects it in ruins. That would be noted. A chief does not go to the stool room; If you sneak and go in, it would be noted. A chief does not visit the cemetery, must not fail to take the advice of the elders. It is the elders who placed you on the stool so you must consult and listen to their advice. When you have flouted these for a while and the people become fed up with you, they can decide to destool. When they start the destoolment procedures, you may be with up to 30 charges. No matter how well you defend yourself one of the charges may lead to your destoolment.³⁶

Another respondent commenting on the reasons a chief may be destooled said:

When a chief commits an offence, he can be destooled. If he sleeps with the wife of his subject or reveals the origin of a subject or

³⁴ Napoleon Bamfo, "The Hidden elements of Democracy among Akyem Chieftaincy: Enstoolment, Destoolment, and other Limitations of Power," *Journal of Black Studies* 31, no. 2 (2000), 149-173.

³⁵ Anshan Li, "Asafo and Destoolment in Colonial Southern Ghana, 1900-1953," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995), 327-357.

³⁶ Personal communication with Nana Afikurah III, 2016.

exhibit insulting behaviour. It could even happen that ever since he was destooled there has been no peace in the community. When he is charged with these offences and he is unable to respond, he is destooled. If he is able to defend himself and he is proven innocent, he is allowed to continue his rule as a chief.³⁷

The reasons given above by the Assin elders for the destoolment of a Chief varies. While the destoolment may be occasioned by the neglect of duty by the Chief, others range from taboo infractions to putting up insulting behaviour. Danquah as cited by Li had made a similar observation when he writes:

The founders of the Akan State Constitution in their wisdom instituted a mode of procedure whereby an unwanted and oppressive Chief, an insufficient or incapable Chief, an unmoral or easy-going Chief, could be deprived of his position permanently at any time the governed felt that there were good reasons for deposing and replacing him by a better man.³⁸

In this whole process of destoolment, what is the role of the *Ohemaa*? My interest in the subject was aroused by a comment of *Ohemaa* Nana Dokua of Assin Kumasi when I interacted with her on a field trip. Nana Dokua made a categorical statement to the effect that she has the power to destool her chief if she found him wanting. She explained further:

If you are a Chief and you are behaving in manner on becoming of a Chief, I will not send you to the Traditional Council. I will destool you personally. You can take the matter to any place. I will come and meet you there. If you act in a manner that will bring disgrace to the community, you will be destooled.³⁹

Do the comments of Nana Dokua imply that an *Ohemaa* in an Akan community has the power to destool her Chief? A destoolment process before the Central Regional House of Chiefs’ judicial committee will be used to analyse her statement.

In a matter before the Central Regional House of Chief’s judicial committee on an interlocutory appeal from the ruling of the Assin

³⁷ Personal communication with Abusuapanin Kwesi Ntsiful, 2016.

³⁸ Li, “Asafo and Destoolment,” 337-338.

³⁹ Personal communication with Nana Dokuaa, *Ohemaa* of Assin Kumasi, 2016.

Attandasu Traditional Council, the Abusuapanin of Assin Adubiase, Kweku Wiredu together with his Ohemaa, Nana Darkoaa II and ten other elders of the community have levelled 18 destoolment charges against their chief, Nana Kesse Tare II. Among the charges are that:

1. Nana has locked up the palace denying the *Abusuapanin*, *Ohemaa* and the elders' access to the palace. This has made it impossible for us to pour libation during his absence on *Akwasidae* and other Adae days
2. Nana has collected all the stool regalia from the old lady who was given custodian of the items. He has kept them in an unknown place which neither the Obaahemaa, Abusuapanin nor any of the stool elders know
3. Nana does not come home during Adae and for over three years has not officially opened the stool room and poured libation.⁴⁰

An analysis of the composition of the plaintiffs in this case shows that the person leading the destoolment charges is not the Ohemaa but the Abusuapanin of Assin Adubiase. The role of the Ohemaa is only a supporting one. The consent of the Ohemaa was not needed before destoolment procedures were initiated by the king makers. This is contrary to the views expressed by the Ohemaa of Assin Kumasi to the effect that she has the power to destool her chief on stated grounds of misbehaviour.

This position of the Ohemaa not clothed with the customary power to initiate destoolment proceedings against her Chief is canvassed by Nana Gyamfua II, the Omanhemaa (Paramount Queen Mother) of Assin Attandasu Traditional Area. In an interview with her, she commented "he who gives power takes away power." Her comment was born out of the fact that many Mbaahemaa (plural for Ohemaa) were arrogating to themselves the powers to initiate destoolment procedures against their chiefs. According to Nana Gyamfua II, the involvement of the Ohemaa in the making of a chief was limited to her nomination and involvement in the administration of the community.

The Ohemaa was required to be the senior advisor to the chief and as was stated earlier, was the sole person who could publicly rebuke the

⁴⁰ Proceedings of the judicial committee of the Central Regional House of Chief (2009): 3-7

chief. In the matter of destoolment, the Ohemaa has no leading role to play. She has no authority to take away the powers of the chief since she did not vest the chief with the powers. The power to destool a chief is the sole prerogative of the elders (kingmakers) who seat the chief on the stool of his revered ancestors. Nana Gyamfua II outlined the steps to be followed before the decision to destool a chief is arrived at.

1. The conducts of the Chief that are considered not fit for a person occupying a stool must first be reported to the Royal Lineage by the Ohemaa. The Royal Lineage would then be expected to advise the Chief to desist from such behaviour.
2. If the Chief refused to heed the call and advice of the Royal Lineage, the Ohemaa would have to report the conduct of the chief to the Gyaase. The Gyaasehene would be expected to call on the Chief together with some elders of the Gyaase to advise the chief.
3. It is when these pieces of advice fail that destoolment charges would be brought against the Chief.
4. The case would be referred to the judicial committee of the Traditional Council for hearing. The Chief would be given opportunity to defend himself. If he is unable to answer the charges, the Committee would declare, “Ofata se ye tu no,” he deserves to be destooled.

The pronouncement of the Committee does not mean the Chief has been destooled. The actual act of destoolment is performed by the Abusuapanin assisted by the Gyaasehene and other chiefs. According to the Nana Gyamfua II, these are the very persons who enstool the Chief in the stool room and are thus clothed with traditional authority and power to destool him. The Ohemaa in this instance only plays a supporting role in the destoolment procedures. In the instance of the Assin Adubiase destoolment case cited earlier, the destoolment procedure is being led by the Abusuapanin not the Ohemaa.

The Ohemaa on her own cannot initiate destoolment proceedings against a chief as suggested by the Ohemaa of Assin Kumasi. The view expressed by Nana Gyamfua is backed by Akan customary law. It is a provision of the customary law that those who enstool a chief

have the right to destool him when they find the chief no longer suitable for the position.⁴¹

This provision of the customary law on destoolment was applied in the Akyem Kotoku destoolment crisis. In this case, the Ohemaa of Akyem Kotoku, Nana Akua Asantewaa, stated in a press conference that she has destooled the Omanhene of the Akyem Kotoku Traditional Area, Oseadeyo Nana Dr. Frimpong Manso IV. In response to the destoolment charges, the Abusuapanin stated that according to Akan customs and tradition and the Chieftaincy Act of 2008, the processes of destoolment of a chief cannot be initiated by the Ohemaa on her own. He explained further the processes of destooling a chief:

An Omanhene could only be destooled after preferred charges have been levelled against him through the Abusuapanin by the Ohemaa and the family. After consultation and discussion with the family we then meet the Gyasehene who will then call a meeting with the Royal family and if this is not resolved at that level, the Gyasehene will then present the case to the Kingmakers. It is the Kingmakers who have jurisdiction on the case and NOT the Ohemaa.⁴²

The Abusuapanin further stated:

The Kingmakers having powers to destool will then refer the destoolment charges to the Regional House of Chiefs Judicial Committee. If they uphold the charges, the appellant has the fundamental rights to appeal to the National House of Chiefs Judicial Committee. The destooled chief has the right to go to Supreme Court and ask for a Supreme Court Review.⁴³

It is clear from the Akyem Kotoku case that the Ohemaa is not clothed with the customary powers to initiate or purport to have the powers to initiate or destool his chief on any stated grounds of misbehaviour. That power to destool is vested solely in the Kingmakers who enstooled the Chief in the first instance.

⁴¹ Li, "Asafo and Destoolment," 351.

⁴² "I Am Still the Akyem Kotoku Chief- Oseadeyo Nana Dr. Frimpong Manso IV," <https://www.Peacefonline.com/pages/comment/features/201909/392142.php>, 2019)

⁴³ "I am Still the Akyem Kotoku Chief."

Conclusion

The article has assessed the significance of the chieftaincy institution and how the institution has become attractive to the educated elite. The attractiveness of the chieftaincy institution has led educated elite, royals and sometimes non-royals, struggle to win the favours of the Ohemaa and the other kingmakers. A major consequence of this fierce struggle is the possibility of the wrong person selected to be a chief and subsequently leading to strife and destoolment.

The potential for abuse of political power by the chief is high, thus the inherent powers to check that of the chiefs. A chief swears an oath to serve his people. He has no power of his own and could act arbitrary and capriciously. To check the potential abuse of power by a Chief the Akan has embedded in their political system the power to destool any Chief who may be found wanting or falling short of his oath of office. The position of the Ohemaa in the enstoolment processes has well been articulated. The right of the *Ohemaa* to nominate a royal to sit on the stool of his ancestors cannot be questioned and any attempt to side-line her in the process would be rendered null and void.⁴⁴

The Akan political system is well structured with every actors' roles and functions well delineated. The Akan political system also has in-built mechanisms to check the abuse of political power by the chief and all other political actors. The right to enstool and destool are all well enshrined in the customary law.

In an ongoing exercise to codify the customary succession rules of all the traditional areas in Ghana by the National House of Chiefs, the LIs of the Twifo Hemang Traditional Council and Breman Asikuma Traditional Council have been passed by the Parliament of Ghana. Section nine of both LIs spells out the destoolment procedures of their Paramount Chiefs. The destoolment procedures of the Twifo Hemang stated in section nine of the LI states thus:

(1) The Kingmakers shall, in consultation with the Queenmother and the Head of Family of the respective houses of the Nana Amodia Aduana Abrade clan prefer a destoolment charge against the occupant

⁴⁴ Bimpong-butua, “The Role of Queens,” 9.

of the Tuankor Stool in the courtyard of the palace of the chief at dawn.

(2) The Kingmakers shall constitute a panel to give the chief a hearing and where the chief is found liable, the Chief shall be destooled.

(3) The destoolment of the occupant of the Tuankor Paramount Stool shall be complete when the sandal of the Chief is removed after a sheep has been slaughtered.⁴⁵

The provision in the Breman Asikuma LI on destoolment is not much different from that of the Twifo Hemang. When a chief is found guilty of the charges preferred against him by the Kingmakers, the Gyasehene shall proceed to the stool room to pour libation, slaughter a sheep and renounce allegiance to the Chief. The Gyasehene shall again pour libation at the palace of the chief, slaughter a sheep and renounce allegiance to the chief.⁴⁶

From the Lis, it is clear that the persons responsible for the destoolment of a chief are the Kingmakers. As stated in the Twifo Hemng LI, the Ohemaa is consulted together with the heads of the various families, to prefer destoolment charges against the chief. The right to destool a chief is conferred on those who enstooled him, the Kingmakers. This confirms the position canvassed by Nana Gyamfua II that it is the one who gave power that has the right to take it away. And in this instance of destoolment, the one who gave power to the Chief to sit on the stool of his ancestors is not the Ohemaa, but the Kingmakers.

The literature on destoolment has tended to ignore the role of the Ohemaa in the whole process. The discussions have always centred on how kingmakers have destooled one chief or the other, with no mention of the role of the Ohemaa.

The article has established that the role of the Ohemaa to nominate a royal to be enstooled a Chief is still intact and cannot be taken away from her. However, she does not have the power to initiate destoolment proceedings against her Chief on her own without the recourse to the Kingmakers. This lack of authority to initiate destoolment

⁴⁵ Draft legislative instrument for Twifo Hemang Traditional Council (2018), 5.

⁴⁶ Draft legislative instrument for Breman Asikuma Traditional Council (2018), 6.

proceedings against her Chief is seen in the fact that she is not a member of the body of Kingmakers.

Therefore, it would be erroneous to ascribe to the Ohemaa a paramount role in the destoolment processes. This position is in tandem with the customary law which stipulates that it is the right of those who elected the Chief to destool him when they find him no longer suitable for the position.⁴⁷ The Ohemaa, however, has a minimal involvement in the destoolment processes as indicated in the LIs stated above.

Finally, to forestall incidences where an Ohemaa may arrogate to herself the power to destool a Chief, it is my suggestion that they must be educated to enable them appreciate their roles in the political system and be made to understand that the power to destool a Chief is not vested in them. If anything at all, in the destoolment procedures, they play only a supporting role to the Kingmakers.

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⁴⁷ Li, “Asafo and Destoolment,” 351.