

The Sunyani-Domase (Ghana) Chieftaincy Dispute in Retrospect

Journal of Asian and African Studies
2019, Vol. 54(1) 38–51
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DOI: 10.1177/0021909618794986
journals.sagepub.com/home/jas


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Abstract

This paper interrogates the historical background to the diarchy system of rule in the Odomase traditional area in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. Relying on archival documents complemented by interviews, the research reveals that unlike chieftaincy forms in other traditional Ghanaian societies, the people of Odomase have a completely different practice in electing chiefs. The two royal houses have the endorsement of central government to elect two candidates to be installed concurrently as chiefs for the traditional area. The authors argue that the dual chieftaincy arrangement in Odomase, despite its seeming challenges, is the best solution to address the intractable conflict in the traditional polity of the area.

Keywords

Chieftaincy, paramountcy, Antepim, Bosomtwe, diarchy

Introduction

Chieftaincy in Ghana

Chieftaincy is one of the earliest traditional institutions in Ghana. In pre-colonial times, traditional chiefs were in charge of local administration, and were also the spiritual rulers that people looked up to for spiritual needs (Odotei and Awedoba, 2006). They were the embodiment of the customs of their people. Chiefs served as the intermediaries between the living and the dead. The *Omanhene* (Paramount Chief) was the executive head, legislator, law enforcer and judge of the highest traditional area court. In the area of judicial matters and law enforcement, he presided over most court proceedings. Executively, administrative matters were entirely the responsibility of the *Omanhene* and his elders. In addition to his responsibilities, he was the Commander of the traditional state's army and directed operations at the war front.

Like his divisional chiefs, the *Omanhene* was duly installed and secured legitimacy when he swore the oath of allegiance to his people and family heads had sworn to him in turn to accept him as their chief. The *Omanhene* worked in concert with the divisional chiefs to implement the traditional council's goals. The chief was required to consult his subjects for their opinion before

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decisions were taken on any major matter. Accordingly, the chief assumed a democratic posture despite wielding enormous power as the chief executive, lawmaker, and legislator (Odotei and Awedoba, 2006: 16).¹ Today, the chief's role includes fighting poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, environmental degradation and all forms of retardation (Odotei and Awedoba, 2006: 15). He upholds the democracy and human rights of his people and ensures health care, employment and good governance in his area of jurisdiction. His people expect him to devise effective networks for the rapid infrastructural development. Kingmakers elect royals with higher educational qualifications to tackle these challenges.

Odomase is an Akan state but its chieftaincy system differs slightly from those of several other Akan areas in Ghana. The chieftaincy system in Odomase can be likened to a diarchy as two traditional rulers simultaneously rule the Odomase traditional area. All efforts to entrust power to a single royal family in Odomase failed and in 1982 the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government elevated both chiefs to paramount status. This is an uncommon practice in Ghana's chieftaincy system. This paper therefore discusses the factors leading to the introduction of the dual chieftaincy system in Odomase and assesses the consequences of the practice on Odomase in particular and Bono-Ahafo in general.

This study relied extensively on archival data deposited at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) office at Accra and Sunyani, the Brong-Ahafo Regional capital. This method was important because archival data provides the actual and unbiased record on the two divisions' claims to traditional authority. In addition to the archival data are oral data provided by Nana Bobie Amankwaa, a sub-chief to augment information obtained from the archival records.²

Emergence of Odomase as a traditional area

Odomase, an ancient traditional area in the Brong-Ahafo region is bounded on the east by the river Bissi, on the west by the river Ayakoma, on the north by the river Tain, and on the south by the Atronie and Wamahinso villages. The area covers about 520 square miles with about 57,000 people.³ The political system of the earliest settlers was monarchical and was founded on the patrilineal system with an accepted practice of succession by sons. The matrilineal system has been practiced by all others for several centuries now (Yeboah, 1990: 17). Like other Akan areas, a single chief with his council of elders were originally responsible for the administration of justice in the Odomase traditional area. The decisions of the chief were often final and hardly challenged. In consultation with his elders, he adjudicated criminal and civil cases, comprising mainly debt collection and boundary disputes on the basis of the evidence adduced by witnesses for both parties. Regarding murder, stealing, fraud and other criminal cases, trial by ordeal was the procedure at the traditional court.⁴ The people of Odomase catered for some of the needs of their chiefs by rendering services for them. For instance, the youth organised communal labour to clear weeds in the chiefs' farms and hunters gave vital parts of their game as token to the traditional leaders and portions of meat to their family heads.⁵

Settlers and the Odomase society

Migration into Odomase began in the late 17th century when farmers and hunters from Kumase and its satellite towns moved for farming and hunting purposes. Awua Panyin and his brother Kwasi Bosomtwe, together with their kinsmen of the Bantama royal family, asked for a place to settle in Odomase during the reign of Kofi Kuma, an Antepim chief (Yeboah, 1990: 14). The traditions assert that the Bosomtwe group eventually became permanent residents at Odomase under

the care of the Antepim chief and his elders until the late nineteenth century, when other individuals and groups from Bantama migrated to the Odomase area to join their kinsmen.⁶ As large numbers of hunters and farmers from far and near settled, Odomase gradually developed into a popular hunting ground settled by hunters, members of the Asante royal family and other migrants from Kumase and its neighbouring towns. In the 19th century, Odomase became a popular Asante security post settled by Bono and Asante peoples.

Oral traditions suggest that the Antepim (Bono) and Bosomtwe (Asante) chiefs were originally equal in status and possessed the same authority in the adjudication of cases. For example, the chiefs pronounced verdicts in criminal cases after they had gone into private consultation. Court fees and fines were shared equally between the Antepim and Bosomtwe divisions. In the late 19th century, farming was done mainly by individuals, whilst families had rubber plantations and cocoa plantations in the 20th century.⁷ Proceeds from the few family or community farms in the Odomase traditional area were used to finance palace activities.

Until 1900, the Odomase inhabitants co-existed peacefully. The Antepim and Bosomtwe chiefs were regarded as equal and none made claims to authority or superiority over the other. Although occasionally there were flare-ups, civil war was averted because settlers gradually intermarried and inhabitants became one group (Yeboah, 1990). There were no concrete boundaries to separate the two divisions. The Antepim and Bosomtwe chiefs attended festivals and durbars together and even exchanged paraphernalia to demonstrate friendliness and equality. For instance, the tradition of the Antepim asserts that Nana Kofi Dayyaw, their chief, fought on the side of the Bantamahene during the Asante-Fante war of 1807. Nana Dayyaw is said to have sworn the *Ntam Keseye* (The Great Oath of Asante) and fought until the Fante army was defeated and was given the *Twenesini* (short drum) by Asante as a sign of appreciation. The queen mother of Kumase, in appreciation of the victory won by Nana Kofi Dayyaw, also gave to Nana Afia Durowaa state fans.⁸ In Odomase itself, the Bosomtwe people readily provided to the Antepim chief, the ear, the arm, and the tusk of any elephant they killed in recognition of the Antepim's autochthonous status.⁹ Originally, the two Odomase divisions celebrated the Tanyaw festival and other activities once in every year without problems. The festival marked the period that ancestral stools and shrines of the state deities were cleansed. Chiefs from the two divisions also received homage from their elders amidst merry making. Kwame Arhin says that the essential meaning of annual festivals in Ghana was the re-affirmation of the collective solidarity of the communities which consisted of the dead, the living and the unborn (Arhin Brempong, 2001: 31). Funerals involved the whole Odomase area and bereavement in one division was an affair affecting the entire Odomase township. As a result of intermarriages between the two divisions, families transferred farm lands peacefully from one family to another in pre-colonial times.

Origin and escalation of the Odomase chieftaincy dispute

Hostilities between the two divisions began when questions of seniority and ownership of land arose few years after the Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900/01 and Britain claimed Asante as a colonial territory. The Bosomtwe division expressly disregarded the Antepim claim of sovereignty over Odomase land because of the conquest. On Antepim's part, Britain's incorporation of Asante meant that the Kumase chiefs had lost control over Odomase and other lands that they had controlled since the 17th and 18th centuries under the rule of Nana Osei Tutu Opemso I (1670–1717) and Nana Opoku Ware I (1720–1750). From 1900, the Antepim strengthened their claim that their ancestors were the real founders of Odomase and argued forcefully that Asante's rights in Odomase chiefship and land was lost after 1900. To firmly establish their claim, the Antepim insisted that the Bantama chief was not only illegitimate, but also never possessed any Black Stool to cause its

occupant to appropriate to himself the status of a chief. They called for the Bosomtwe chief's position to be reverted to that of *Fiepanyin* (Elder of the family), alleging that the head of the Bantama group in Odomase could only occupy the *Puduo* Stool at Kumase but not an Odomase stool.¹⁰ In the 20th century, the Antepim expected the Bosomtwe to either return to Kumase and leave behind buildings and farms, or stay and regard the Antepim leadership.

Henceforth the Antepim planned to attack, and possibly exterminate the Bosomtwe. The danger notwithstanding, the Bosomtwe chose to stay and hoped for peace to prevail. However, in 1928, the Antepim chief asked the Bosomtwe division to render to him service and homage because the Provincial Commissioner endorsed his superiority in 1914. On the other hand, the Bosomtwe people interpreted their years of peaceful co-existence in Odomase to mean expression of equality in status and so refused to render service or pay homage to the Antepim stool. This misunderstanding marked the commencement of a protracted dispute between Antepim and Bosomtwe that lasted for more than 50 years (Yeboah, 1990: 12). But it was protracted because of the invention of Oral Traditions. For example, the Antepim stated that the state of independence caused by the absence of an heir to the Antepim stool in the late 19th century allowed Kwabena Kyere, head of the Bosomtwe family, to act as the chief of Odomase. As he was a very wealthy man and controlled large quantities of gold, Kwabena Kyere made for himself stool paraphernalia, became an able administrator, ensured law and order and acted as the legitimate chief of Odomase. Accordingly, the Odomase community gradually accepted him as their overlord.¹¹ The Bosomtwe chiefs thereafter ruled the Denkyira migrants and leaders of the 'small army of occupation' that the Asante kings had stationed in Odomase to collect tribute and to organise surveillance of conquered areas (Fynn, 1961: 93).¹² Additionally, the Antepim regularly referred to the S. W. Saxton agreement of 1922, in which Kwame Koran, occupant of the Bosomtwe stool, sat to the left of Kwasi Apraku (the Antepim chief) to sign. This sitting of the chief at the left was interpreted as Bosomtwe's subordination to Antepim. In public functions too, the Bosomtwe stool always preceded Antepim during processions, and the Bosomtwe stool allowed cases to be tried at the Antepim's Palace.

All these instances indicated to the Antepim that the Bosomtwe had an implied recognition of the preeminence of Antepim, and so Antepim had consciously or unconsciously allowed the Bosomtwe stool to be accepted as an integral part of the Odomase society. Thus, as the dispute over the rightful group to occupy the paramount stool developed, Antepim forcefully claimed the Odomase stool. The question on the legitimate royal family to rule in Odomase was complicated as there existed no documentary evidence to back claims of autochthony by the two divisions. The two divisions relied on oral tradition that was largely susceptible to corruption. This made it difficult for successive governments of Ghana, and progressive chiefs and individuals, to resolve the Odomase dispute.¹³

Colonial policy and the Odomase dispute

By 1900, the British through the Treaty with the Brungfu chiefs had portrayed Kofi Kuma of Antepim as the first chief (interpreted as supreme head) of Odomase and Awua Panyin from Bosomtwe as the second chief (interpreted as Antepim's subordinate) (Debrah, 1969: 11).¹⁴ However, because the two divisions had sat together to adjudicate cases since pre-colonial times, few issues emerged regarding the two chiefs' authority over Native Courts and jurisdiction. The problem with the court system began when the British colonial government officials held Tribunal sessions in the palace of the Antepim chief. As should be expected, this was interpreted to mean that the British colonial government supported Antepim's claim of supremacy over the Bosomtwe people. The latter therefore occasionally boycotted the sittings of the Tribunal, claiming that

members of the Antepim division were favoured in the dispensation of justice and in the sharing of court fees during court sittings.

The chief alleged that he received smaller amounts in court proceeds than the Antepim Stool occupant although court proceeds were to be shared between the two divisions equally.¹⁵ However, available records do not suggest that there was inferiority of jurisdiction in favour of the Antepim Stool in matters pertaining to the Tribunal or the court in the Odomase area.¹⁶ For the Bosomtwe, although there was the inclination on the part of the Bosomtwe chief to refer to the occupant of the Antepim Stool as 'my senior brother', this did not imply superiority of Antepim but a mere show of courtesy and to maintain friendly relations (Debrah, 1969: 41).

To forestall peace, the Provincial Commissioner in 1928 intervened to resolve the question of legitimacy of the Odomase chief over the land. Based on historical data, especially the Treaty of 1898 between Odomase and the British, in which Nana Kwabena Kyere had signed as the second chief of Odomase, signifying inferiority in the parlance of the Odomase people, the commissioner proposed a solution to the Antepim-Bosomtwe disputes when he declared,

I know from records of officers here and from my own experience that the Peseo stool is the second stool of Odomase and Koran's the senior. Everyone knows that Kwame Koran has his subjects who through him also act as the subjects of the first stool of Odomase. I know also that arrangements have existed between you in the past as to the sharing of, and the trying of oaths (cases). They shall still continue. Friendship is to be restored. Chief Kwame Koran is to return to rebuild his own town on the approved site.¹⁷

The Antepim looked for an opportunity to sever all links the Odomase area had with metropolitan Asante in the 20th century. They abhorred Asante's continuous interferences in Odomase affairs since the 18th century. The first opportunity came in 1929 when the Asantehene appointed Nana Kwame Koran as the substantive chief of Bantama and required him to settle in Kumase as the Bantamahene. The Antepim Division tried to prevent the installation of another pro-Asante chief in Odomase to occupy the vacant Bosomtwe stool.

When a new chief was introduced to the entire Odomase community in accordance with custom, the Antepim section under the leadership of Nana Kwasi Apraku opposed him. They suspected him to continue with Bosomtwe's allegiance to the Asantehene.¹⁸ When Kwasi Amankwa and other young men of Bosomtwe carried Fokuo as the new chief, it resulted in a conflict between the two divisions. The conflict attracted the Asafo sympathisers from neighbouring areas of Fiapre, Nsuatre and Sunyani. These supported the Antepim division to attack the Bosomtwe division. Kwaku Gyau died in the conflict and 24 others were seriously wounded.¹⁹ S. Warring, the Acting Provincial Commissioner of the Western Province of Asante, dispatched a police force to restore peace and order in the town. He ordered chiefs of the two divisions to deposit an unspecified amount as surety and required them to promise to be of good behavior. By supporting the Antepim division, Nananom Kofi Ansu and Kwasi Sabi, the respective Adikro of Sunyani and Fiapre, were fined £100 and £50 respectively, but this could not stop the rivalry between the two divisions; neither did it prevent the Asante chiefs from interfering in Odomase's traditional affairs.²⁰

The Antepim-Bosomtwe hostilities intensified in 1935 when the British government decided to restore the Asante Confederacy. The Antepim division opposed the decision and refused to participate in the restoration ceremony, insisting that the Odomase people were Bono and not Asante.²¹ The British Colonial authority reminded the chiefs that the confederacy was mainly to facilitate administration. Even so, Nana Kwasi Apraku, the Antepim chief, refused to sign the attendance sheet at the restoration ceremony and commented openly that he would not taste the fruit of the plantain that is tilted towards Kumase (Debrah, 1969: 21). Thus in the early 20th century, the Antepim division unsuccessfully tried to sever all political links with the Asante central government.²²

Resolving the dispute

The efforts to resolve the dispute began in 1914 when Nana Kwame Koran appealed to the Provincial Commissioner to support his claim that he was the rightful chief of the Bosomtwe stool in Odomase with the right to all the lands and resources because his ancestors from Asante conquered Odomase in pre-colonial times. He asserted that Nana Kwasi Peseo of Antepim was, therefore, his vassal. The Antepim chief disagreed with this claim and contended that the Bosomtwe chief was a stranger, and should instead consult him for land. As expected, the Bantama people protested. Rather, they regarded themselves as conquerors with uncontrolled access to land and its resources that had briefly been lost to the British in the 19th century.²³

The Bosomtwe dispute with Antepim was eventually taken before the Berekumhene, Nana Kwadwo Banieh, the incumbent paramount chief of the area in 1928 for arbitration. In his judgment, the *Omanhene* of Berekum observed that Awua Panyin of Bosomtwe's stool was inferior to that of the Antepimhene Kofi Kuma. With respect to Bosomtwe's use of the Black Stool, the *Omanhene* remarked that the chief could not have a Black Stool because although the Akan tradition allowed migrants to create a chief's stool, migrants must respect legitimate occupants of stools of any town or village in Ghana, and that the ancestors' stool he (Awua Panyin of Bosomtwe) possessed could not be regarded as a Black Stool of the Odomase traditional area (Yeboah, 1990: 33; see also Debrah, 1969: 29). For him, Nana Kwabena Koran, the Bosomtwe chief, could only be *Safohene* (sub-chief) over his own people but would have to regard Nana Kwasi Apraku as the legitimate chief of the Antepim Division. This is because the first migrant Bantamahene, Nana Awua Panyin, had no Black Stool when he settled at Odomase. At the same time, Kwame Kyem, the incumbent Bantamahene, had told the Berekumhene that 'the Asantehene could ask a Black Stool to be made for a chief who had gained his confidence'.²⁴

This judgment should have settled matters, but a boundary dispute between the Wankyihene and the Bantamahene brought up the issue of custodianship over land again when Nana Kwasi Peseo, the chief of the Antepim division, and the supposed owner of the land in question, showed no interest in the litigation. The Bosomtwe chief and his division concluded that the attitude of the Antepim division affirmed that they had either lost control over the Odomase land through the Asante conquest or that the Antepim had chiefs because of Asante's policy to allow conquered territories to administer their own affairs and only pay tribute.²⁵

In response, the Antepim insisted that they were the original settlers of Odomase and had never been subjects of the Bantamahene in Kumase. The Bosomtwe were settled in Odomase by the Bantamahene as caretakers of the Odomase land and not as a conquering army.²⁶ Since the British had defeated Asante, the Antepim reserved the right to regain total control over the Odomase land. For them, the Bosomtwe chief's position was that of *Fiepanyin* (Elder of the family), and not that of a chief.²⁷ The strained relations between the two stools remained unsolved until an agreement was entered into by both parties on 3 September 1929 between *Ohene* Kwasi Apraku of Odomase and his elders of the first part and *Ohene* Kwame Koran and his elders on the second part.

First, the chiefs agreed to swear an oath of allegiance to each other on enstoolment and for their queen mothers to sit in council together to nominate candidates for either stool. The Divisions agreed to share in the repayment of any state debt. They further agreed that at state functions, Kwasi Apraku of the Antepim Division would sit to the right of Kwame Koran of the Bosomtwe Division, in accordance with Native Customary Law, and Koran would precede Kwasi Apraku on state processions, a position that, by Native Customary Law, designated a concession of precedence in favour of Kwasi Apraku but did not imply service by Kwame Koran to Antepim. The seniority accorded Apraku was therefore limited to the respect for Native Customary Law affecting

ceremonial and precedence and only in accordance with former established custom the chiefs had for centuries practiced.²⁸

The chiefs agreed to establish one Tribunal at Odomase comprising both chiefs, their respective Queenmothers and chiefs. Revenue from the Tribunal was also to be divided into three parts: one part for the Antepim Stool, one part for the Bosomtwe Stool and one part for the Odomase traditional area as a whole. The two chiefs agreed to pay the police in times of trouble; and to use the balance of revenues of the part apportioned for the area to build a Tribunal. For peace and order to reign, the divisions agreed for the Tribunal to continue to sit in the house of Kwasi Apraku, in accordance with established custom.²⁹ An *Apam* (councilor) was to be appointed by the entire area to swear an oath to serve the divisions faithfully and impartially. The two agreed for the District Commissioner to take the final decision in the event of a dispute over a nominee and for each stool to control his people if service was called for by the state. It was also understood that government's correspondences should pass through the Antepim Stool and passed on further to the Bosomtwe Stool (see details in Debrah, 1969: 8–11).³⁰

This agreement was significant in the socio-political history of the Odomase area because it bounded both parties without the power to appeal to any court or person and so established the central government as the final arbiter in Antepim-Bosomtwe chieftaincy cases. It also replaced the treaty of 1898 between the Odomase chiefs and the British government in which the latter granted protection to the Antepim division whilst the British sought for free trade in the Bono area. The Agreement also strengthened the two chiefs' position as leaders with inalienable rights and equal privileges. It indicated that the British government expected the chiefs' support and co-operation for peace and progress in the various traditional areas in Ghana.

Although the Agreement ensured compliance to law and order, the Bosomtwe later asserted that it only strengthened the position of the Antepim Stool over the Bosomtwe Stool regarding positions to be occupied by the two chiefs at state functions. For example, clause 4 of the agreement stated that 'the inferior chief must sit to the left of his superior chief in accordance with the Native Customary Law, and Practice'. Similarly, during state processions, the inferior chief was mandated to precede the superior.³¹ Though the Agreement did not stress the supremacy of the Antepim chief over the Bosomtwe chief, the use of the words 'superior' and 'inferior' did not free the Bosomtwe Stool from occupying the position of inferiority in relation to the Antepim Stool. Clause 12 of the Agreement reinforced the British Government's regard of Antepim as superior to the Bosomtwe Stool. This heightened tension in the area and sometimes caused disagreements.

Effects of the Antepim-Bosomtwe dispute

The long, protracted Odomase dispute affected important segments of the Odomase society including chiefs' relations, customs and traditions, developmental projects and political activities.

Chiefs' relations and community development. A significant effect of the Odomase dispute was the perceived or real interferences in traditional affairs in the Odomase area. For example, in 1929, the Antepim Division reported to the District Commissioner (DC) of Sunyani about the continuing interference of the Bantamahene in Odomase affairs.³² By the early 1930, the continuous protests of the Antepim young men about Asante's interferences had significantly affected the friendly relations between Bosomtwe and the Kumase chiefs, as Odomase chiefs slowly drifted away from the Asante monarchy. For instance, on 20th March 1930, Nana Kwaku Fokuo, the new Bosomtwehene, swore the oath of allegiance to Nana Kwadwo Baanie, Omanhene of Berekum instead of the Bantamahene. The new chief promised to keep the peace in Odomase and to sever all connections with the Bantamahene because the latter's influence usually brought disturbances to the Odomase township.³³ Also in view of the problems posed by the dispute, *Otumfuo* Osei Agyeman Prempeh

II, the then Asantehene wrote to the Government Agent of Wankyi/Sunyani to propose change of the names of the two divisions from Odomase 1 and Odomase 2 to Bosomtwe Section and Antepim Section, respectively. He believed that this would help resolve the misunderstandings between the two divisions. This proposal was endorsed by the Asantemen Council.³⁴

However, Asante's interferences continued into the late 1960s. For instance, in 1967, the Asantehene demanded stool revenue from Odomase, Sunyane, Nsuatre and other 'islands of Kumasi' in the Bono-Ahafo region. The Odomase area was also divided on matters of community development. It was difficult for orders for community development to be relayed smoothly through the DC to chiefs in the Odomase traditional area. For example, apart from the old Kumase-Berekum road, which was constructed through compulsory labour provided by the two Odomase divisions, it was difficult to mobilise the entire Odomase community for other community works.³⁵

Custom and tradition. By and large, the Antepim-Bosomtwe hostilities significantly affected the customs and traditions of the Odomase traditional area. For example, the Tanyaw festival, which was celebrated on an annual basis to reunite the Odomase people, ceased due to the disturbances that became associated with the festival. The celebration was marked by confrontations between the two divisions and often caused irreplaceable losses.³⁶ Accordingly, Tanyaw, the deity of the town, which was the binding force of the two divisions, was neglected by both parties as an unknown syndicate took advantage of the dispute and the neglect of the deity and stole it.³⁷ In addition to the above, the divisions organised separate durbars whenever a government official visited the town. Huge amounts of money were spent during these durbars to impress supporters as chiefs and their supporters tried to outwit each other.

For several years, the question on the right chief to be addressed when a government official visited the area could not be resolved. Besides, the two divisions hardly agreed to resolve even minor social problems like the construction of places of convenience in the Odomase township.³⁸ The dual chieftaincy system in Odomase also affected political allegiance and intermarriages between the two divisions as families were divided on the chief they should support in times of dispute. In order to prevent internal family disputes, most citizens left the town to settle elsewhere and only returned during funeral celebrations (Yeboah, 1990).

Odomase's economy and economic activities. The Odomase dispute significantly affected economic activities in the traditional area. Firstly, Odomase had benefitted immensely from its market because of its position as the leading producer of maize in the Brong-Ahafo Region. The dispute eventually separated the maize market and affected the collection of the sales tax placed on every bag of maize sold in the Odomase market to mobilise revenue for the town's development. From the 1950s, each division organised its own market, and selling in another's division was outlawed; as such, citizens sent maize to their respective divisions' markets only (Yeboah, 1990: 28). Thus, the tensed political atmosphere in Odomase negatively affected business and general economic activities.³⁹

In addition, limited revenue intended for communal development was used for legal fees in the many legal contests. By the 1980s, Odomase was the only town closer to Sunyani, the Bono-Ahafo Regional capital, without electricity supply, a police station and a community health center. This was because the divisions opposed each other in the allocation of health, educational and other facilities in each other's quarter. Indeed, as Sunyani, the Bono-Ahafo regional capital, began to expand towards the Odomase township, the divisions disagreed on the rightful chief to collect royalties. Accordingly, the large portion of land between Odomase and Sunyani was left undeveloped.⁴⁰

Oral traditions of Odomase assert also that few individuals established businesses or undertook any major developmental project in the town before the 1980s. Prospective business persons feared incurring the displeasure of the other division if they established firms.⁴¹

Despite the above negative effects, the protracted dispute persisted because Wankyi, Berekum and some other traditional areas that traced their origins to Asante were sympathetic to the cause of the Bosomtwe division in Odomase, whilst the Bono Kyempim states regarded pro-Asante states as collaborators of the Asante central government and lent their support to the Antepim Division.

Political activities. The Antepim's struggles with the Bosomtwe manifested also in the former's support for Asantes' opponents in multi-party elections. For example, in the early 1950s, the majority of the Antepim were members of the Ghana Congress Party and so the Asante residents in Odomase supported the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), the Ghana Congress Party's political rival. With the formation of the National Liberation Movement in Kumase in 1954, Asante chiefs and their allies in the Bono area denounced the CPP and rather supported the National Liberation Movement. In response, the Antepim declared support for Nana Agyeman Badu, and Nana Akumfi Ameyaw, of Dormaa and Takyiman, respectively, in their struggle for an autonomous Bono existence. Since the Bono chiefs' council was anti-Asante, the Bosomtwe division naturally opposed the Bono chiefs' movement.⁴² During the multi-party campaigns, and especially following the CPP government's creation of the Bono Ahafo Region in 1959, some Antepim activists regularly discriminated against the Bosomtwe and subjected them to hatred. Those of the Bosomtwe division were regarded as enemies of the region because they had opposed its creation.⁴³ The formation of the Bono Kyempim Council and the refusal of the Bosomtwe division to join it introduced character assassination between the Antepim and Bosomtwe divisions and further worsened their hostilities. Thus, the Odomase area became noted for conflicts, legal contests, protracted litigations and disturbances.⁴⁴ Until the mid-1970s, the only developmental project jointly undertaken by the two divisions in Odomase was the construction of the Odomaseman Senior High School, which they did with the cooperation of the Ghana Education Service.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the CPP government raised the status of a number of chiefs in Ghana from *Adikro* to *Amanhene* to prevent chieftaincy disputes (Rathbone, 2000). With respect to Odomase, Nkrumah raised the status of the two Odomase chiefs to paramountcy, and as should be expected, this created problems when his government was overthrown in a coup d'état in 1966.⁴⁵ The National Liberation Council (NLC) government's Decree 331 reversed the status of paramount chiefs who had supported the CPP to *Adikro* (village chief) asserting that their elevation by Nkrumah was unconstitutional.⁴⁶

In Odomase, the NLC's demotion and elevation exercise favoured the Bosomtwe stool, which was elevated to paramountcy on the advice of the Asantehene.⁴⁷ The notice approving the elevation of the chief of Awua-Domase to paramount status was published in the sub-section (2) of section 12 of the chieftaincy Act 1969 (Act 81). Upon this publication, the chief of Awua-Domase, Nana Kofi Awua III, wrote a letter to the occupant of the Antepim stool, Nana Kwasi Peseo II dated 18th February 1969, announcing the 'good news' and inviting him to the inaugural ceremony. He stated,

...this affords me with the greatest pleasure to inform you that, through the instrumentality and recommendation of *Otumfuo* the Asantehene, the National Liberation Council has approved the elevation of Awua-Domase to paramount status. A date for the durbar to mark the occasion will be published in due course, and I hope to invite you to grace the occasion with your presence.⁴⁸

On 5th March 1969, the chief sent a copy of the Local Government Bulletin to Nana Peseo to prove to him the genuineness of his elevation to paramountcy. Before the durbar, rumours spread that the Antepim division would attack their opponents if Nana Awua III processed through the Antepim section of the town, compelling the police to surround Nana Peseo's division to forestall any possible disturbances. The police presence notwithstanding, a brief riot occurred that nearly marred the success of the durbar.⁴⁹ The Antepim people believed that the Asantehene engineered the NLC's

demotion exercise to favour the Bosomtwe's stool. Since the Asantehene's attitude towards the Bono was a total departure of the practice of equal treatment of the two divisions, it strengthened the animosity between the Antepim and Bosomtwe divisions and further alienated him and the Antepim and their Bono counterparts (Yeboah, 1990: 29).

The Antepim, Nsoatre and Sunyani chiefs whose stools were demoted had informed the NLC government that their stools were neither subservient to the Golden Stool nor were they subjects of the Asantehene, and would not accept the subordination of their stool to the Bosomtwe stool.⁵⁰ Together, they submitted to the NLC, a petition titled, 'Petition of Nananom of the Nsoatreman, Odomaschene No. 1 and Sunyanihene regarding their status and land revenue'. The chiefs opposed the revenue transfer exercise, declaring categorically that the Antepim were the legitimate custodians of land in the Odomase traditional area and would never share its stool land revenue with the Asante.⁵¹ However, the NLC government did not adhere to this petition. On 3 March 1969, the chiefs sent another petition to the NLC government expressing displeasure with the payment of their stool lands revenue to the Kumase Traditional Council. They deemed it unacceptable, called for it to be stopped, and for the total amount transferred to be repaid to their respective stools because government had not only favoured Asante but had also erred by accepting the recommendation of the Asantehene who resided outside the Bono Ahafo Region as against the recommendation of the Brong-Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs. The Petitioners wrote:

your humble petitioners wish to point out to the NLC that its approval of the recommendation of the Asantehene for the elevation of the chief of Awua-Domase to paramount status has enormously raised passions in the Odomase township; Sunyani and Nsoatre in particular and the whole Brong Ahafo Region in general that we are afraid there will be much unrest in the three towns mentioned above and possibly in the region as a whole.⁵²

The chiefs condemned the practice whereby Asantehene recommend chiefs outside the Asante region to be raised to the status of *Omanhene* and make them members of the Brong-Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs. They described the Asantehene's action as 'anomalous' and 'preposterous' and appealed for government to adhere to the Brong-Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs' proposals regarding the elevation and demotion of chiefs. The chiefs further appealed for the stools of Nsoatre, Antepim and Sunyani to be raised to paramount status. They opposed the Asantehene's elevation of the Bosomtwe chief to paramount status, and prevented him from participating in the deliberations of the Brong-Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs because the Asantehene had no jurisdiction in the Brong-Ahafo Region.⁵³

To resolve the dispute, the NLC set up the Bannerman Commission to investigate the Bono chiefs' assertions and make recommendations. In April 1968, a few days into the Commission's sittings, it adjourned sittings *sine die*. Whilst awaiting the Commission's report, the Administrator of Stool Lands was mandated to send the stool lands revenue accrued from Bono-Ahafo to the Kumase Traditional Council. As expected, the Bono chiefs asked for an injunction to be placed on the revenue accrued from the stool lands of the affected chiefs. The Antepim chief argued that the Commission would have justified their claims if it had submitted its report. Although the petition did not have the backing of the entire group of Bono Ahafo chiefs, the petitioners argued that this did not vitiate its importance. The NLC, however, rejected the petition, ignored the recommendation of the Brong-Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs, and accepted that of the Asantehene.⁵⁴

In place of the Bannerman Commission, the National Redemption Council 1972–1976, set up the Coussey Commission in 1973 to investigate and recommend solutions to the Bono and Asante chieftaincy disputes. The Commission's Report to the National Redemption Council in 1976

recommended the abolition of all Regional Houses of Chiefs in Ghana to prevent protracted litigation and disputes across Ghana (Agyekum, 2008: 71).⁵⁵

The findings and recommendations were not implemented and for the next six years the dispute remained unresolved, causing animosity and affecting national political activities in the town. People undermined candidates presented for national elections. For example, in the 1969 General Elections, Mr JH Mensah, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning in the Second Republic of Ghana, was selected as the candidate for the Progress Party for the Sunyani Constituency seat and won all the polling station votes except that of Odomase, his hometown. Mr. Mensah was from Bosomtwe Odomase and so the Antepim opposed him, believing that he will collaborate with the Asante central government to lord it over them.⁷⁰ The Antepim position implies that Mr. Mensah would have faced strong opposition in his own constituency if he had won the election on grounds of politics.

By 1980, the dispute over the right custodians of land had been taken to the Supreme Court of Ghana for adjudication as the two divisions opposed the settlement of the case at the Regional and National Houses of Chiefs. The issues associated with the dispute had obviously become complex and to prevent further disturbances in Odomase, the government of the PNDC elevated chiefs of the Antepim and Bosomtwe divisions to the status of paramountcy in 1982. From this year, Odomase became one of the few traditional areas practicing dual chieftaincy in Ghana in the 21st century (Agyekum, 2008: 71).

Conclusion

The Odomase traditional area, in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana, experienced a long period of instability, political disunity, economic stagnation and social disorder because of the Antepim and Bosomtwe dispute. The streets and general outlook of the Odomase township were deplorable at the peak of the litigation and legal tussles in the 20th century. The conflicts sometimes spread across the boundaries of the town to neighbouring states as pro-Asante and pro-Bono states readily supported the two feuding divisions. Due to the intensity of the dispute, governments could not improve upon infrastructure in the Odomase township. The CPP government's interference in the Odomase chieftaincy affairs created some stability in the early 1960s but complex problems arose after the overthrow of the Nkrumah government. The NLC's demotion of the Antepim chief further complicated the dispute and to ensure peace, stability and peaceful co-existence in the Odomase traditional area, the PNDC government elevated both the Antepim and Bosomtwe chiefs to paramount status in 1982 and regarded their families as legitimate royal families to fill vacant stools with their own elected chiefs. On this basis, Odomase has become one of the few traditional areas in Ghana practicing the dual chieftaincy system with the endorsement of the central government of Ghana.

Authors' Note

This is how the town is known to the Bono people. The name helps to distinguish it from other Odumase/Odomase towns in Ghana. In official records, it is written as Odomase. Oral tradition asserts that the town was founded under an Odom (not Odum) tree, giving it the name Odom (Odom tree) *ase* (under).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Meanings/Etymology of Akan Words

Nana – An ancestor. The Akan chief/queen is regarded as the reincarnate of an ancestor. Hence the *Nana* title is given to all Akan chiefs/queenmothers.

Omanhene/Amanhene – Head(s) of the traditional area.

Agona and *Ekoona* – Two of the seven clans of the Akans of Ghana.

Ohene (chief)/Ahene (chiefs) – Traditional leader(s) of traditional Akan areas or towns in Ghana.

Odikro/Adikro – Chief(s) of an Akan village.

Fiepanyin – Head of the extended family. He is also called *Abusua* (family) *panyin* (head).

Apam – Contract or oath of understanding.

Safohene – Wing chiefs.

Notes

1. The Ghanaian chieftaincy practice requires the chief to consult the elders as a mark of respect for them. Chiefs who fail to consult elders and respect their citizens risk reproach and destoolment. To Akan chiefs, the citizens' support is indispensable for a successful stay in office.
2. Nana Bobie Amankwaa was the former Krontihene of the Antepim division of Odomase. It was impossible to speak to the chief himself because of the succession dispute then raging in the Antepim division.
3. District statistics file, Sunyani District Office. Based on the figures provided in the National Population Census, 2012.
4. Nana Bobie Amankwaa, 2014, Personal Communication.
5. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/20/11 Odomase Native Court 1945–1953. Report by Government Agent; 1945. The commonest animals in the Odomase area were elephants. Sunyani is believed to have derived its name from *Sono* (elephant) *nwayer* (slaughter grounds). That is, the hunting and dissecting grounds of elephants.
6. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6 Odomase Native Affairs 1924–1935, Antepim Stool History. The people of the Antepim division trace their origins to Takyiman, one of the earliest Akan areas in Ghana and asserts that a few other kinsmen had joined them from Denkyira before the 15th century.
7. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6 Odomase Native Affairs 1924–1935, Antepim Stool History.
8. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6. See also PRAAD-Sunyani BRG 1/2/93 – Odomase II (Bosomtwe) Affairs 1960–1976. Report by Government Agent; 1960.
9. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6.
10. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6, Odomase Native Affairs 1924–1935. Provincial Commissioner Odomase to Chief Commissioner, Kumasi, 1924. See PRAAD-Sunyani BRG 28/6/1. Chiefs of Odomase vs King of Berekum. This dispute saw the two chiefs of Odomase struggling to control Odomase lands. The practice whereby only one chief supervised the land did not exist in the early 1900s.
11. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/5/5 Petitions General 1950–1955: Petition of Antepim to the District Commissioner.
12. See also PRAAD-Sunyani BRG 2/2/9 Odomase I State Council Affairs. Native Affairs, Bosomtwe Division, 1961.
13. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/7 Odomase Native Affairs 1947–1954.
14. The Odomase chiefs described themselves as first and second chiefs.
15. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 28/3/9 Odomase Land disputes. Report by the District Commissioner, Sunyani. March, 1927.
16. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/20/11 Odomase Native Court 1945–1953. See also PRAAD-Sunyani BRG 2/5/16, Petitions General 1960–1967.
17. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 28/22/2 Confidential Diary District Commissioner, Sunyani. 1928–1930: 4.
18. PRAAD-Accra, Adm. 1312, Berekum Native Affairs, 1924–1930: 115.
19. PRAAD-Accra, Adm. 1312, Berekum Native Affairs, 1924–1930: 116.
20. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG. 23/2/31. Letter from D.C. Sunyani to Chief Commissioner, Asante 1930–1935, July 1930.
21. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6 Odomase Native Affairs, 1924–1935: DC to Chief Commissioner, Kumasi.

22. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6 Odomase Native Affairs, 1924–1935: DC to Chief Commissioner, Kumasi.
23. Nana Bobie Amankwaa, 2014, Personal Communication.
24. Nana Bobie Amankwaa, 2014, Personal Communication.
25. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/5/12 Complaints General, 1958–1966. Bosomtwe Native Affairs: 49.
26. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/2/93. Odomase (Bosomtwe) Affairs 1960–1972. DCs Report, 1927.
27. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 28/2/45 Quarterly Reports, Native Affairs 1930–1932: 17.
28. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6. Odomase Native Affairs, 1924–1935: Report by DC to PC, October, 1931.
29. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6. Odomase Native Affairs.
30. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/6. Odomase Native Affairs.
31. Kwasi Jawu (Gyau) had signed the treaty as first chief and Kwabena Chiri (Kyere) as second chief and this was interpreted differently by the two divisions, making it difficult to resolve the dispute.
32. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 27/12/9, Monthly Reports on Chiefs 1927–1929, 46.
33. PRAAD-Accra Adm. 1312, Berekum Native Affairs: 114.
34. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/20/11 Odomase Native Court Affairs, 1945–1953, Letter from Otumfuo Agyeman Prempeh II to Government Agent, Sunyani, 7/7/52).
35. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 28/22/12 Confidential Diary DC Sunyani 1930–1931: 21.
36. Nana Bobie Amankwaa, 2014, Personal Communication.
37. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 28/2/45. Quarterly Reports, Native Affairs 1930–1932.
38. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 27/12/9. Monthly Reports on Chiefs, July Report; 1950.
39. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/5/5 Petitions General, 1950–1955, 11.
40. Nana Bobie Amankwaa, 2014, Personal Communication.
41. Nana Bobie Amankwaa, 2014, Personal Communication.
42. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/10 Sunyani Native Affairs, Annual Report by the DC, Sunyani.
43. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/2/93, Odomase II Affairs, 1960–1972; 78.
44. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/10. There is no doubt that Asante conquest of its northwestern states divided up the area between support for Asante central government and pro-Bono areas. The formation of the Bono Kyempim Council rather sharpened the Bono-Asante hostilities, especially in the Odomase area and other areas settled by the Asante citizens.
45. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/5/12 Complaints General 1958–1966.
46. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/2/99. Chieftaincy Matters 1966–1969. Also see Anane-Agyei (2013: 49).
47. See Local Government Bulletin No. 9 of 21 February 1969: 3.
48. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/5/16 Petitions General 1960–1967. Letter from Nana Awua III to Chief, Antepim Odomase 18/2/69.
49. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/2/6. Odomase Native Affairs – 1960–1972.
50. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 27/5/2. Letter from chief of Sunyani and others to the Leadership of the NLC, 1966.
51. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/2/99 Chieftaincy Matters, Sunyani 1966–1969, 35.
52. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 27/5/4, Complaints General 1967–1973. Antepim Division's Petition to the NLC. 11/9/69.
53. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 1/2/99, Chieftaincy Matters 1966–1969.
54. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 2/2/11, Sunyani Native Affairs: 23.
55. PRAAD-Sunyani, BRG 27/5/4 Complaints General 1967–1973, Complaints by the Antepim Division to the Government Agent, Sunyani, November 2/8/67.

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