

**HYBRID BUT ONE-SIDED: WOMEN AND HYBRID PEACE  
ORDERS IN DAGBON, NORTHERN GHANA**

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This research explores socio-cultural beliefs and practices that influenced women's engagement in the 2002-2019 chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs in Dagbon. Inspired by hybrid peace governance, gender essentialism and social constructionism, cultural practices that influence Dagbon women's engagement in peace spaces are analysed based on interview data. The research enters contestations in the critical peace field in two ways. Firstly, it contests feminist scholars' homogenous view of women and peace by presenting context-specific push and pull factors for women's engagement in the hybrid peace process. Secondly, it observes peace orientations – liberal, traditional and hybrid – by their structure and encounters with local culture restrict women's engagement.</p> <p>The research generates insights into women's engagement in a tripartite collaboration between the Ghanaian State, the chieftaincy institution and third-sector actors navigating the liberal-local peace values to address a chieftaincy conflict through three research questions: (a) how do women in Dagbon participate in hybrid peace orders in the chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs in practice? (b) how is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs promoted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices? (c) how is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs restricted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices? Thirteen separate interviews and a group interview from fieldwork were analysed manually with Microsoft Word and ATLAS.ti software. Findings revealed women engaged informally in the hybrid order in seven ways, including reducing tensions, peace education, appearing as witnesses, providing cultural advice, mediating community conflict, secret-channeling vital information to stakeholders, and mobilizing and building women's capacity. Three cultural aspects of the Dagbon society, thus, women chiefs' system, reverence for old women and women in the royal courtyard, and women's performance of social roles, bring them into informal spaces of peace. However, structural male dominance, beliefs and practices of Islam and African traditional religion, and women's use of gendered language during the conflict combine to restrict women's participation in the formal peace spaces.</p> <p>The research recommends more gender-focused studies into the push-and-pull factors of women's engagement in liberal-local orders. Also, gender mainstreaming homegrown hybrid orders for other non-state conflicts in Ghana is recommended.</p>	
Keywords Hybrid peace governance, chieftaincy succession conflict, women and peace, Dagbon	
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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
ATR	African Traditional Religion
CAQDAS	Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CEC	Committee of Eminent Chiefs
CI	Constitutional Instrument
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCE	District Chief Executive
DISEC	District Security Council
GBV	Gender-based Violence
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SWIDA	Savannah Women Integrated Development Agency
TA	Thematic Analysis
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WIPIM	Women in Peace Movement
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This study explores women's engagement in a homegrown hybrid dispute resolution mechanism utilised to address a 200-year-old internecine conflict between the families of two half-brothers (Abudu and Andani). The intermittent conflicts are over selecting a rightful heir to become Ya Na, the paramount chief of Dagbon, one of the largest ethnic groups in Northern Ghana. It aims to understand the push and pull factors that influenced women's role in the 2002-2019 homegrown hybrid dispute resolution processes that combined liberal-local agency and values to address the last crisis. Women engaged informally in the peace process because the social and cultural norms in Dagbon stress exclusive male power and dominance in war and peace decisions, thus restricting women's formal engagements.

## 1.1 Background to study

The peacebuilding and conflict resolution field receives significant interest in academia and international development due to the impact of violent conflicts on stability. Conflicts severely impairs national, regional and global development. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 89.3 million have fled their homes due in part to conflict, with about 27.1 refugees globally in 2021 (UNHCR, 2021). Due to ongoing conflicts, about 69% of refugees globally have come from just five countries - Syria, Venezuela, South Sudan, Myanmar and Afghanistan. Conflicts impact economic development (Ray & Esteban, 2017), public health (Wesley, Tittle, Seita, 2016, p.2352), the human rights of people (Zaleza, 2007, p. 480), climate change and migration (Abel et al., 2019, p. 242). Peacebuilding is, therefore, a tool to



achieve sustainable peace because it addresses underlying social, economic and cultural triggers of conflicts (Smoljan, 2003, p. 234). Conflict stressors have increased significantly in Africa (Institute for Security Studies, 2021), affecting socio-economic development on the continent. The Sustainable Development Goal 16 calls for eliminating violence and discriminatory practices as anchors to sustainable development (UN, n.d).

Violent conflicts in Africa are substantially intrastate (Elfverson & Sjögren, 2019, p.45). Data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme between 1989 and 2004 show that 112 of 119 armed conflicts during that period were intrastate (Westernhoff, 2015), with a high percentage originating from Africa (Gordon-Summers, 1999). In the intrastate conflict bracket, Africa experiences the highest count of non-state conflicts. A conflict is described as non-state if it involves "the use of armed force between organized groups, none of which is the government, that results in at least 25 annual battle-related deaths" (Palik et al., 2022, p.7). In 2021, non-state conflicts accounted for about 3,498 battle deaths in Africa (ibid). Aside from casualties, displacements, injuries, loss of properties, economic crisis, and malnutrition (Alberet et al, 2003), conflicts exacerbate an already bleak socio-economic outlook for the continent (Ujunwa, Okoyeuzé & Kalu, 2019, p. 182)

Africa is, therefore, a special case for effective peacebuilding mechanisms to address conflicts, eliminate their destructive consequences (William, 2016), and prevent conflicts from becoming entrenched and protracted (Mitchell, 2014). Non-state conflicts are predominantly ethno-political and communal. Ethnic, religious, economic situations, incompatible local goals, identities and interests trigger ethno-political conflicts and are channeled through the quest for political power and recognition (Issifu 2015). For example, despite being reasonably democratic, Ghana experiences non-state conflicts over resources, power, religious differences, and ethnicity (Tonah, 2012, p. 3, Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011, p. 7). However, chieftaincy succession conflicts elicit a different level of attention due to their prevalence. In 2017, Ghana Business News (2017) quoted Ghana's Minister of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs as disclosing there were over 358 unresolved chieftaincy succession conflicts in Ghana, with succession clashes in Northern Ghana being among the deadliest (Issifu & Asante, 2016; Bukari et al., 2021, p. 161).

This study is on the succession conflict in Dagbon, a traditional area in Northern Ghana. Dagbon has a long history of succession conflicts between two royal lineages (Abudu and Andani) over the Yendi namship (kingship) since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011). The disagreements border on selecting an eligible heir to the namship, the legitimacy of the selection procedure and the applicable rituals and rites needed to install a Ya Na, the overload of Dagbon (Tonah, 2012, p. 6; Ahorsu, 2014, p. 96). A buildup of tension in Yendi resulted in a "3-day war" in which Ya Na Yakubu

Andani II (an Andani) was tragically murdered, alongside at least 30 others, by a group of Abudu fighters (MacGaffey, 2006, p. 79) on 27th March 2002. Dagbon was a theatre of violence, human rights abuses, destruction, deaths and alleged sexual abuse of women and girls by some security agents executing a peacekeeping mandate (Issifu, 2015p. 33; Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011, p. 8). The Dagbon crisis was protracted due to the mistrust between the two royal families (ibid). Also, national politics influences the conflict since the two royal lineages straddle Ghana's major political traditions, with either party seeking to enhance its electoral fortunes (Albert, 2008, p. 52; Tonah, 2012, p.10-12; MacGaffey, 2006, p. 82-86).

To address the Dagbon crisis, the Ghanaian Government used its liberal powers (security) to declare a curfew in the area and to deploy armed security to undertake peacekeeping operations. The Government also used its liberal powers to establish the Wuaku Commission to investigate the causes of the violence, identify perpetrators and make recommendations (Issifu & Bukari, 2021, p.228; Issifu, 2015, p. 35; MacGaffey, 2006, p. 88). In its liberal role, the Government also received technical and financial support from international liberal actors, such as the UNDP (UNDP, n.d), to restore peace to Dagbon. Furthermore, the government and its international liberal players facilitated the traditional mediation initiatives by the Committee of Eminent Chiefs (CEC). The CEC comprised three male chiefs who utilized "traditional African peace practice and diplomacy" (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 222) to mediate the conflict between the two families and see to the installation of a new Ya Na (ibid, 230) The CEC eventually provided a roadmap for peace (Ahorsu, 2014) in November 2018 after which the conflict was deemed resolved (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 233) In addition, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) with liberal and traditional peace values were involved in the peace process (Issifu, 2017; Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 229) Thus, the collaborative synergies between the liberal and traditional actors to negotiate peace in Dagbon constitute a moderate hybrid peace form (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 222).

Against this backdrop, the peace in Dagbon was 'negotiated' by hybrid actors and orders. Negotiated peace processes are widespread in Africa, just as their failure rate. Its toolkit includes ceasefires, power-sharing agreements (Cox, 2019, p. 468), negotiations, and mediation. The high failure rate of negotiated peace agreements invites critical examination for three reasons. Firstly, the wide application of negotiated peace processes to address intrastate conflicts signals their acceptability in African contexts. Secondly, the tenuous nature of the stability purported to establish is worth analyzing, as about half of the peace settlements fail to hold, escalating violence (Martin, 2013p. 334). Thirdly, negotiated peace processes are macro and state-based, thus limiting analysis of localized cases. The last observation drives this study to highlight issues in local hybrid interactions in non-state conflicts.

Dispute resolution, in general, reflects liberal-traditional schisms. Liberal peace mechanisms aim to strengthen the markets, deliver state security, and promote democratic institutions and human rights values (Daley, 2007, p.333). Conversely, traditional peace processes aim for consensus, restoration of relationships, truth and healing (Issifu & Degraft, 2019, p. 22). These two peace approaches are contested in the critical peace field (Jutilla, Pekonen & Väyrynen, 2008, p. 636). First, the liberal peace toolkit is unsuited for non-western contexts (Belloni, 2012; Boege, 2018; MacGinty, 2008; MacGinty & Richmond, 2013). On the other hand, traditional peace strategies perpetuate the exclusion of different social groups (George, 2018; Mount, 2018; Issifu & Bukari, 2022). So, while critical peace scholars advocate for peace not “divorced from their contexts of use” (Galtung, 1996, cited in Jutilla et al., 2008), the exclusionary tendencies of local peace processes are a cause for concern. Issifu and Degrafts (2019) propose a strategic libetradilisation that builds on the synergies of the liberal-local peace paradigms to address non-state conflicts in Africa, hence; homegrown hybrid peace orders (p. 29). But a homegrown libetradilisation approach only resolves the values and organisational aspects of the exclusion challenge, not representation. For instance, hybrid orders are hailed for their non-linearity approach (Belloni, 2012) but criticised for excluding other social groups, especially women (McLeod, 2015), in practice. There is a need to subject homegrown hybrid peace formulations to further scrutiny to assess claims of the lack of women’s representation and participation.

The Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) emanates from United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) to ensure women’s protection from violence during conflicts, and their participation in local and global peace processes. After two decades of existence, WPS is hampered by conceptual and practical issues ranging from slow implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) by countries to mainstream gender in local peace contexts, low funding for civil society and UN agencies associated with the agenda, and a conceptual flaw that treats women as a homogenous group ripe for similar gender analysis paradigms (Newby & O’Malley, 2021, p. 2). In addition, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 enjoins countries to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and to act to reduce violence” (UN, n.d). A critical pathway to achieving this goal is gender representation and participation in local peace initiatives. Therefore, the Dagbon peace process holds an empirical treasure for this scrutiny.

Studies into women and peace have increased, but most dwell on negotiated peace processes applied to state-based conflicts (Palik et al., 2022). For example, Krause et al. (2018) have suggested that women’s participation could make peace agreements durable. Also, on representation, Sharoni (2017) argues that the whole conflict resolution space, including hybridity, “valorizes the behaviour of men and the exclusion of women.” Similarly, Belloni (2012) opines that hybrid peace mechanisms

will likely preserve the social order by excluding women and minority groups from the peace process. Examining factors that influence women's participation and representation in hybrid peace mechanism is becoming commonplace in academia and international development at the turn of the millennium (McLeod, 2015). But how does analysis of women's participation in State-based peace orders help understand local orders such as the Dagbon case (Paloo & Issifu, 2021; Issifu & Bukari, 2022)? How are feminist scholars' claims that including the 'local' in peacemaking preserves structurally unequal gender relations (McLeod, 2015; George, 2018)?

The questions above are difficult to answer because scholarship on Dagbon's homegrown hybrid peace orders rarely examined women's inclusion and participation (see Paloo & Issifu, 2021; Issifu & Bukari, 2022), prompting the current inquiry. Hence, the subject matter of this study is the push and pull factors in Dagbon's society that influence women's participation in the homegrown peace order.

## **1.2 Research Considerations**

Research into women's participation in peace orders associated with non-state conflict is scarce. In resolving local conflicts, the tradition and culture of a local area could limit women's participation. This study examines traditional and cultural influences around women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy resolution affairs.

### **1.2.1 Research Problem**

Which factors encourage or hinder women's participation in hybrid peace order in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs?

### **1.2.2 Research Objectives**

The research establishes the following objectives:

1. To explore women's participation in the hybrid peace order in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs.
2. To examine the influence of socio-cultural beliefs and practices related to women's participation in the hybrid peace order in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs.

### **1.2.3 Research Question**

For research questions, they are specifically outlined as follows:

1. How do women in Dagbon participate in hybrid peace orders in the chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs in practice?
2. How is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs promoted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices?
3. How is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs restricted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices?

These research questions will be addressed through a qualitative case study. Interviews were the primary data collection procedure. In all, 13 separate interviews and a group interview involving four persons were conducted in three communities in Dagbon. The data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

### **1.3 Significance of the study to policy and research**

The adverse effect of conflict on economic and social development is well-documented (see Ray & Esteban, 2017) and the consensus among development scholars is that no meaningful development occurs without peace and stability (Igbuzor, 2011). The nature of chieftaincy succession conflicts and the structurally unequal gender relations rife in northern Ghana could restrict women's participation in peace orders. The research aims to contribute insights into the critical peace field, specifically gender and peace in local contexts. Thus, this study holds significance for policy and academic research.

The contribution of this research to academia is twofold. Firstly, it will expand the international gaze on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in Africa. Specifically, it will unpack the push and pull factors influencing women's participation in hybrid orders associated with non-state conflicts. This research will add insights from local contexts to the existing literature on gender and peace.

Secondly, the Dagbon case provides a conceptual treasure for three reasons. Firstly, research into hybrid peace has been growing since the turn of the new millennium; hence the Dagbon case will further expand this growth. Secondly, hybrid peace has applied chiefly to national-level conflicts, with limited examples of its use in non-state conflicts. When this research succeeds in conceptualising the negotiated peace efforts in Dagbon as moderate hybridity, it can expand scholarship on hybrid orders

associated with non-state conflicts. Lastly, it adds a gender lens to hybrid peace conceptualization, opening ways of analysing gender relations and power dynamics in local settings.

As a contribution to policy, empirical research provides evidence to back academic explanations and social change. For policymakers in Ghana, this study's findings show gaps in representation in peace processes. Different voices and stakeholder participation are needed in peace processes at the local level. In this connection, gender mainstreaming is to be considered in policies designed to replicate homegrown peace orders in northern and southern Ghana. For non-state actors, the findings can improve advocacy, education, training and community programmes to position women and women groups to participate effectively in local peace initiatives. Dagbon has powerful women chiefs despite patriarchy, but findings show they lack the capacity to assess the conflict situation. Thus, traditionally-placed training programmes that target women leaders will be crucial in future negotiated peace processes.

#### **1.4 Organisation of Thesis**

The thesis report is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 presents a background to the study, clearing the grounds for non-state conflicts, negotiated peace and their relationship to the Dagbon case. The research problem, objectives and questions are also outlined. It concludes by showing the significance of the study to academia, policy and the WPS agenda.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to clarifying the context. It provides insights into the chieftaincy institution and its related succession conflicts. It introduces Dagbon, its people and its culture to help in the subsequent discussion of the case. The chapter also reviews the genesis of the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict, including the peace orders and actors.

In chapter 3, the theoretical and conceptual considerations of the study are presented. Specifically, the hybrid peace concept applied to the Dagbon case is explained. In theorizing gender and peace, concepts such as gender essentialism, the social construction of gender, and patriarchy are discussed, including their clear relationship with the case study. Chapter 4 presents the methodology for gathering and analyzing the study's qualitative data. The data collection instrument (interview) and data analysis process (thematic analysis) are presented. Finally, the study's limitations, ethical considerations, positionality statements, and data management protocols are clarified.

In chapters 5 and 6, findings from the data analysis and conclusions are discussed respectively. Specifically, the contribution of Dagbon women to the hybrid

peace process is discussed. The cultural and traditional dimension that promote and restrict women are also reported in that chapter. Chapter 6 discusses some findings from the data. Then, the previous chapters are connected to the conclusions of Chapter 6. Finally, I discuss areas for further research and make recommendations.

## **2 WOMEN IN PEACE AND THE STUDY CONTEXT**

This chapter sets the study and the study area in context. It begins with a brief articulation of the situation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Africa. Next, it discusses the institution of chieftaincy in Ghana and succession conflicts associated with the institution. What follows afterward is a brief socio-cultural overview of Dagbon. In addition, a historical overview of the Dagbon succession conflict is presented to situate the cause of the conflict in a historical perspective. Finally, the collaboration by liberal and local actors within Ghana, hence the homegrown hybrid dispute resolution mechanism, used to resolve the dispute in Dagbon is presented.

### **2.1 The Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa**

Africa is more affected by conflict than any other continent. Between 1960 and 1998, thirty-two wars killed nearly seven million people and displaced about nine million in Africa (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013, p. 2). Conflict is an inevitable feature of life (Isike & Uzodike, 2011, p. 36) in many African countries. They are becoming protracted and localised (Issifu, 2016, p. 142), negatively affecting stability in the region. For instance, chieftaincy succession conflicts in Ghana pose a challenge to national stability (Rozalska, 2016, p. 381) since the conflicts are "organized violence with expected political outcomes" (Mount, 2018, p. 203).

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding receive the utmost attention in academia and practice (Isike, 2009, p. 30, cited in Olaitan & Isike, 2019), but interest in localized peace orders and their potential to exclude some groups, especially women (Zvaita, 2019, p. 156) is recently emerging. Women are targeted with direct violence and gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict areas (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013, p. 2-5), but men



("spoilers of the peace") dominate the peace space. Consequently, men downplay opportunities to address gender inequality in post-conflict contexts (Goetz & Jenkins, 2016, p. 212).

The 2010 United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) report asserts women in Africa are among the least represented in formal peace processes. Of all 130 global peace agreements signed between 1990 and 2014, only three had women signatories (Krause, Krause & Bränfors, 2018, p. 987). Meanwhile, a robust relationship exists between women signatories and the durability of peace agreements (ibid, p. 989). Women's participation remains low despite the adoption of the UNSCR 1325, which enjoins state parties to ensure women's protection from the violence of conflicts, and their participation in peacebuilding (Issifu, 2016, p. 188; Krause et al., 2018). Only a few countries have implemented National Action Plans (NAPs) outlined in UNSCR 1325 to facilitate women's inclusion in peace. Women's underrepresentation in peace initiatives is due to structural and patriarchal constraints (Mbabazi & Suleiman, 2020) at all levels; misunderstanding of their agency in wartime and peacetime; underreporting of their peace roles (cited in Oliatan & Isike, 2019, p. 137), and fears that women's agency effaces the patriarchal pot (Goetz & Jenkins, 2016, p. 212).

Furthermore, a chunk of women's peace work is based on "essentialist conceptions" (Mueller-Hirth, 2019, p. 165), such as women's inherent pacifist nature (Dumond, Prügl & Spano, 2021). Thus, gendered assumptions about peace work perpetuate inequality (Goetz & Jenkins 2016, p. 214) and limit women's participation (Krause et al., 2018). African conflict and peace literature are replete with informal women's peace work in Sierra Leone, Kenya and Liberia. For instance, Sierra Leonean women in informal groups mobilized for mass non-violent protests, lobbied national and regional leaders, and undertook social reintegration activities when the civil war ended in 2002 (Oliatan & Isike, 2019, p.144). Adjei (2021) explains that the non-violent protests by Liberian women groups, led by Leymah Gbowee, encouraged the peace talks between President Charles Taylor and the rebel groups, which produced a comprehensive peace agreement on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2003 (United States Institute for Peace, 2003). Liberian women were also active in post-conflict reconstruction efforts (p. 25). In Kenya, Mueller-Hirth (2019) argues that Kenyan women designed early warning systems that encouraged inter-ethnic mobilisation, dialogue and mediation during the 2007 electoral violence (Mueller-Hirth, 2019, p. 167-173). While women are creative, essentialist notions imply that women have emotional and social intelligence, nurturing capabilities and the moral authority for mediation and peacebuilding, which result in sustainable peace (Mbabazi, Naiga & Helen, 2020). Feminist scholars argue a minimisation of essentialist notions about women's peace roles could contribute significantly to peace (Dumond et al., 2021) because women-led informal groups exhibit courage in conflict resolution contexts (Goetz & Jenkins, 2016, p. 212).

Based on the preceding paragraphs, there is no gainsaying that gender intersects with conflict and security profoundly, yet it is on the margins of academic theorizing and research (Singh, 2017, p.150). This motivates some scholars to argue dispute resolution mechanisms should ensure social justice, including gender equality (Isike & Uzodike, 2019, p. 37). Mbabazi & Suleiman (2021) calls for gender mainstreaming in dispute resolution mechanisms to open up the space for diverse skills to be utilised for sustainable peace (p. 34). The call for gender mainstreaming in peace processes, I argue, should commence localised, context-specific research on which push and pull factors influence women's engagement in dispute resolution mechanisms. This study will therefore investigate women's participation in a homegrown hybrid dispute resolution mechanism associated with the chieftaincy succession conflict in Dagbon to understand socio-cultural barriers women face in localised dispute resolution initiatives.

An overview of the chieftaincy institution in Ghana, the Dagbon chieftaincy succession conflict, as well as actors in the hybrid dispute resolution mechanisms, are presented to provide the context for the current study.

## **2.2 Chieftaincy and Succession Conflicts in Ghana**

The Republic of Ghana is one of the most stable and democratic countries (Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011, p.7) in Africa. The Ghanaian state is a plural entity in which power is exercised by modern and traditional (chieftaincy) political institutions (MacGaffey, 2006, p. 91). The chieftaincy institution is the oldest in Ghana and has survived colonial and postcolonial policies aimed at its containment (Bukari, Osei-Kuffour & Bukari, 2021, p. 156). Contrary to the expectation of modernisation theorists that the chieftaincy institution would eventually evaporate due to modern political systems brought about by colonisation, the chieftaincy institution appears etched and entrenched among its admirers (Boafo-Arthur, 2003, p. 125; Bukari et al., 2021). For instance, although a modern democratic republic, Ghana's chieftaincy institution remains strong (Tonah & Fleisch, 2012). Chiefs embody the cultural aspirations of Ghanaians and are a recognised authority for people in rural areas, especially (Ahorsu, 2014, p. 115). Rozalska (2016) asserts that to understand the social structure of Ghana is to examine the statutory and non-statutory roles chiefs play (p. 389), recognised and legitimised by the fourth republican constitution of Ghana (Bukari et al., 2021, p. 157).

Ghana's 1992 constitution and the Chieftaincy Act 759 (2008) defines a chief as "a person who hailing from appropriate family and lineage, who has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or

queen mother under the relevant customary law and usage" (cited in Owusu-Ansah, 2013.p. 33). While eligibility qualifications for chiefs vary from one area to another, there is a uniform national qualification. Per the Chieftaincy Act 759, a person convicted for treasonable offences, fraud, or moral and national security breaches is not qualified for selection to a skin or stool (ibid, p.33). Chiefs serve as links between their subjects and the modern government (Taabazuing et al., 2013, p. 7). Also, their subjects call on them to resolve disputes, perform sacred and religious rites, celebrate festivals, make by-laws and 'lobby' for development projects in their areas (Bukari et al. 2021, p. 156-157). The relationship between the modern Ghanaian state and chiefs is perplexing in three ways. Firstly, to maintain their neutrality and insulation from the control of the modern state, Ghana's constitution (1992) bars chiefs from contesting elective political offices and engaging in partisan politics (Taabazuing et al., 2013, p. 6). Similarly, the constitution prohibits partisanship in the chieftaincy institution (Stacey, 2014, p. 26). Secondly, there are collaborative engagements between the modern state leaders and traditional rulers in Ghana, with the latter performing various government functions (Stacey, 2014, p. 26). For instance, some chiefs are appointed by the government to serve on boards of some public institutions. Also, some chiefs are members of the Council of State, which advises the President of Ghana on constitutional responsibilities such as appointing superior court justices and heads of public institutions. Thirdly, in local governance, power is democratically decentralised and exercised by the people of an area through a district assembly system. Chiefs have no defined roles in the local governance system, i.e. at the district and regional levels. The closest chiefs have come to exercising some 'influence' in the local governance structure is through the president's (non-binding) consultation with them in his power to select one-third of district assembly members (Taabazuing et al., 2013, p. 7). The removal of chiefs from the local government system often generates feuds between district political officials who represent the modern state and chiefs who feel disrespected and sidelined in development initiatives in their jurisdictions (Boateng & Bawole, 2021, p. 555).

In the selection of chiefs, a foundational difference exists between northern and southern Ghana. Northern Ghana comprises five administrative regions - Northern, North East, Savannah, Upper East, and Upper West - located roughly north of the Lower Black Volta River, along with its tributaries, the White and Red Voltas, the Oti, and Daka rivers (Awedoba, 2006, p.1). Compared to the south, northern Ghana is significantly underdeveloped and has a higher incidence of poverty (Kabala, 2022). Eleven other regions make up southern Ghana, and they have an "equatorial wet-dry climate" that extends from the Gulf of Guinea to the border regions with northern Ghana, ie. Brong Ahafo, Bono East, and Oti regions (Stow, 2016, p. 33). Firstly, in many parts of southern Ghana, chiefs occupy stools and are enstooled or destooled.

However, northern Ghana chiefs sit on a collection of cow skins (gbon for Dagombas) and thus are enskinned and deskinning. Secondly, destoolment is present among southern paramountcies because a chief is selected by **men** (mortals) who represent royal lineages. The grounds for destoolment could include physical impairment, disregarding elders' advice, and inviting public scorn to the stool. Northern Ghana chiefs are said to be divinely selected (through kingmakers' ritual incantations and the interventions of religious actors) and thus cannot be deskinning (MacGaffey, 2013, p. 160). The gods are believed to take the lives of estranged chiefs, or their elders conspire to poison them (Ahorsu, 2014, p. 100-101). There are also differences in the selection procedure for chiefs across ethnic groups and geographies in Ghana, but all chiefs are selected from defined royal families. Hence, selection is based on kinship ties. For example, among the Akan, a queen mother nominates a candidate from the contending royal families and her nomination is affirmed by the kingmakers (Adanwomase, n.d). In Dagbon, the Ya Na and his sub-chiefs are selected from the Nabihhi class (royal family) by eligible kingmakers (Mahama, 2004, p. 17).

Chieftaincy in Ghana also has a gender aspect. Male southern chiefs are nominated by women referred to as queen mothers among the Akan ethnic groups (Owusu-Ansah, 2013, p. 32). A queen mother acts as the adviser to the chief because she is considered a repository of wisdom. She is not the wife of the chief, but in some cases she is the mother of the chief. Among the Ashantis in southern Ghana, the queen mother's role is likened to a mother who breastfeeds his son (with wisdom). So serious is her role that she can be destooled or blamed for the deviance of a chief (Stoeltje, 2021, p. 1-3). Queen mothers also settle disputes among the womenfolk and advocate for the welfare of women and children (ibid). Consequently, the concept of women chiefs exists in Ghana, but their status differs significantly between the north and south. In Dagbon, women chiefs exercise exclusive claim over territories like their male counterparts. For the pre-eminent women chiefs in Dagbon, there is a hierarchy that begins from Kukulogu, Kpatuya with Gundogu as the terminus stage (Owusu-Mensah, 2013, p. 32). With minor exceptions, most southern queen mothers perform complementary roles to male chiefs (Odotei, 2006) as they do not exercise exclusive influence as their counterparts in Dagbon. Women chiefs have no seats in the National House of Chiefs (Boafo-Arthur, 2003, p. 135).

Aside from the concerns of gender obscurity in chieftaincy matters, succession conflicts challenge national stability. As of 2017, there were about 352 protracted conflicts in Ghana (Ghana Business News, 2017) triggered by legitimacy claims by factions, i.e., the legitimacy of claimants to a skin/stool of the nominators and the rites and rituals of the process (Bukari et al. 2021, p. 172). Chieftaincy-related conflicts are rife, especially among highly centralised and hierarchical ethnic groups such as Dagombas (Ahorsu, 2014, p. 91). A prevalent perception is that northern Ghana is prone

to chieftaincy conflicts (Tonah, 2012, p. 3; Bukari et al. 2021) because the area has the highest aggregate of deadly chieftaincy conflicts (Issifu & Asante 2015, cited in Issifu 2016).

Consequently, there is a “renewed interest” by the Ghanaian State to minimize violent succession conflicts through a ‘constellation of actors’ (Bukari et al, 2021) and to maximise the benefits of the institution for national development. This interest is spurring considerable investments in formalising and modernising the institution (Ubink, 2007, p. 124) to reduce violent succession conflicts. The quest to modernise the chieftaincy institution often results in more challenges since modernisation is construed as an excessive intrusion by the modern political state. The Dagbon conflict is often a clash between customary tradition and modern political processes. An overview of the tradition and culture of Dagbon clarifies the clash with modernisation and politicisation attempts.

### **2.3 The Socio-cultural context of Dagbon**

The Dagbon State, located in the Volta Basin of the Northern Region of Ghana, is part of the Mossi- Dagomba group founded by warriors from the Sahelian region nearly 400 years ago (Tonah, 2012, p. 5). Through raids, the migrant warriors conquered and ‘exterminated’ leaders (tindamba) of the indigenous ‘stateless’ Gur group (MacGaffey, 2013, p. 21), assimilating the cultures of indigenous people in the process (Staniland, 1975, p.1- 3). The people from Dagbon are called Dagbambas (the popular English variant is Dagomba) and speak Dagbane. Dagombas share a common history and ancestry with their neighbours, the Mamprusi to its north and Nanumba to the south, considered children of the legendary warrior Na Gbewaa (Staniland, 1975, p. 1, MacGaffey, 2013, p. 21). Dagbon is the largest of the four main ethnic groups in the Northern Region, constituting more than half of the region’s population (Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011, p.9).

The Dagbon area is surrounded by Savannah vegetation and experiences one rainfall season annually (Tonah, 2012, p.5). The primary economic activity of the region is agriculture, with yams, guinea-corn, millet and maize cultivation as everyday agriculture activities (Staniland, 1975, p. 2). Northern Ghana (i.e., the five regions) has the potential to become the grain basket of Ghana, but unfavourable climate and environment, high levels of subsistence farming practices (ibid, p. 2-3), conflicts, underdevelopment and underinvestment (Kabala, 2022) limit this prospect. The sale of surplus foodstuffs, trade, labour and craft rake in additional cash for families (Oppong, 2013, p. 21).

Tradition (Dagbon kali) is expressed mainly through three activities of social and religious significance. Firstly, the beating of the tom tom (drum) amidst chants contains lessons of Dagbon's history and the appellation of the Ya Na, '*the lion of Dagbon*'. Ya Na literally means "power chief" (Mahama, 1987, p.2), showing the enormous power of the office. The second concerns festivals and cultural ceremonies performed at the palace of the Ya Na. Finally, religious sacrifices to gods and ancestors are undertaken by the Tindana (earth priest) (MacGaffey, 2013, p. 35) to ensure the "prosperity of the land and the fertility of the people, and their crops and stock" (Oppong, 2013, p. 10). The Ya Na exercises exclusive power as the head of the royal family. All lands are vested in him (Ahorsu, 2014, p. 100). He is the head of the administrative machinery of the Dagbon traditional area and appoints sub-chiefs and elders (Staniland, 1975, p. 16).

Dagbon society is divided into hierarchies of thirteen divisions, over 300 subdivisions with chiefs directly appointed by the Ya Na (Mahama, 1987, p. iii). There are also 'minor' chiefs who govern villages appointed by sub-divisional chiefs (Oppong, 2013, p. 27). The ruling class, nabihhi (persons of the royal blood), comprises the royal family as *primus inter pares*, with more than 100 chieftaincy skins reserved for them (Mahama, 2004). A common rule in Dagbon is that no son can raise above his father, thus effectively restricting access to the namship (kingship) by sons whose fathers were not Ya Nas (Oppong, 2013, p.31). Below the Ya-Na are divisional chiefs, sub-chiefs and elders, part of the nobility class. The Ya Na is selected from among the *nabihhi*. He should be the son of a former Ya Na and must have occupied one of the skins of Savelugu, Mion and Karaga (Mahama, 2004, p. 17-18). Commoners are *yili* (households) comprising related men, their wives and children, with the eldest of the man acting as head. A *yili* head makes decisions about agriculture, marriage and ancestral sacrifices (Staniland, 1975, p. 14). In a Dagbon village, usually, a group of round huts converge but are demarcated to reflect commoners, nobles and family's specialty (e.g. the chief's barbers' quarters) (Staniland, 1975, p. 15), although in practice, people relate without class distinctions.

Dagbon is a male-dominated society. There are strong social constructions on what constitutes masculinity and femininity. A Dagomba man is expected by society to exhibit courage, and robustness, for he will be called a woman if he lacks these 'male qualities'. Men are barred from cooking; cooking is the exclusive role of women. Wives are expected to be obedient and submissive (Mahama, 2004) to their husbands. Men make decisions for the family and community, while women attend markets, help on farms, and perform care activities at home (Oppong, 2013, p. 26). Women accept that decisions about war and peace are made by men (Mahama, 2004). Politically, Dagbon has women chiefs who govern exclusive territories (Odotei, 2006). The high-

est female chief, Gundona, is a member of the nabihhi class. In theory, she is so powerful that the Ya Na cannot veto her decisions (Abdul Hamid, 2007). Princesses from the nabihhi class also exercise some level of influence among women folks and in the royal courthouse because they advise their sons and brothers who are chiefs. Old women, widowed, and who have reached menopause matter greatly in Dagbon. They are deemed to be repositories of wisdom, hence respected by society and invited into men's deliberations (Mahama, 2004).

Tradition and culture shape the religious cosmology of Dagbon and vice versa. Dagombas' belief in the existence of God, Naawuni, predates the appearance of Islam and Christianity in Dagbon. For adherents of the African traditional religion (ATR) in Dagbon, Naawuni is an omnipotent force with many smaller gods to assist his affairs (Mahama, 2004, p. 180). The concept of a God with gods, deities, and ancestors as layers of an indigenous worship and belief system, according to Mahama (2004, p.181-183), has experienced a significant dwindle in Dagbon since the advent of Islam well before the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Only about 10% of the Dagombas currently associate themselves with ancestral worship (Abdul-Hamid, 2010, p. 3). Despite its introduction to Dagbon in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and its popularity in Ghana's South, Christianity has made very little inroads in Dagbon (Mahama, 2004, p.183, Abukari & Abukari, 2021, p. 39). Islamic beliefs and practices became a fundamental feature of the Dagbon State (Imam, 2015, p. 33) from the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the 16<sup>th</sup> Ya Na, Muhammed Zangina. Ivor (1965) describes Na Muhammed Zangina "as the first Muslim to become king, and not as the first king to become a Muslim" (p. 89). Na Zangina created the Muslim class, Afanima and "chieftainships and titles for Muslims" (Mahama, 2004, p. 28). Liman (Imam) is the head of the hierarchy of Muslim chiefs. The Liman leads the Ya Na and chiefs in prayers for state affairs, perform pre-burial rituals on the Ya Na, and is called upon to name children (ibid, 29).

Tradition and culture influence all aspects of personal and public life in Dagbon, including chieftaincy. As a result, succession conflicts and the dispute resolution procedures emerge from customary practices, as shown in the history of the conflict.

## **2.4 History of the Dagbon Chieftaincy Succession Conflict**

The contest over the Yendi namship (kingship) is one of the most prolonged ruinous communal conflicts that has bedeviled Ghana since the colonial era (MacGaffey, 2006, p. 79; Owusu-Mensah, 2022, p.4; Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 225). It is a succession conflict between two royal lineages - Abudu and Andani - to select a Ya Na to superintend over the people, resources and traditional institutions of Dagbon since the late 20<sup>th</sup>

century (Staniland, 1975). The sporadic violence associated with the namship highlights the importance of the Ya Na's office (MacGaffey, 2006). The Ya Na's selection is often characterised by violence, deaths, rancour (Tonah, 2012, p.7) and opposition to the rule of an incumbent Ya Na by a losing lineage (Mahama, 2004, p. 69). However, the namship is governed by laws, rules, processes, procedures and elders (MacGaffey, 2006, p. 81-82). Divisions between the two royal lineages, maneuverings, politicisation of the selection process (Tonah, 2012), failure to adhere to laws, customs and laid-down procedures, and partial changes to the process results in tensions and violence (MacGaffey, 2006, p. 82; Awedoba, 2009 cited in Tonah 2012).

Staniland (1975) argues the succession crisis results from internal inconsistencies and momentary fixes that treat the symptoms, not the causes of the malaise. At Dagbon's founding, only sons of a former Ya Na were eligible to contest (in practice, many sons lay claim to the namship, including by use of war) for selection as Ya-Na (Ladouceur, 1972, p. 99). Due to polygynous practices, the competition among sons became stiffer; thus stricter eligibility protocols were introduced to "limit the competition" (Staniland, 1975, p. 18). However, the restrictions often left gaps for "uncertainty and a capacity for choice" (ibid, p. 18) by the kingmakers who select the Ya Na. With time, eligibility restrictions do little to minimize conflicts because the practice of polygyny leads to many sons of former Ya Nas vying for the namship. Thus, in every generation, Dagbon faces many 'legitimate sons' of "former Ya Nas" eligible to claim the namship. As a result, primogeniture practices (selection of the eldest son of a departed Ya Na) were jettisoned and replaced with rotation between the two royal lineages (Abudu and Andani) in which an eligible Abudu succeeds a demised Andani and vice versa.

Consequently, a "dynastic shedding" was occasioned as the children of Ya Nas' brothers could not ascend to the namship because their father did not become Ya-Na (Staniland, 1975, p. 20). After the "dynastic shedding", a 17th-century event resulted in addition to the eligibility criterion. When Na Gungobili died, eight eligible sons of two former Ya Nas contested for the namship. Per Dagbon custom, three elders (the Kugana, Tugurinam and Gomli and a chief (Gushiegu-Na) constitute the kingmakers. The four utilise soothsaying and rituals to consult the spirits of dead Ya Nas to determine the next Ya-Na (Mahama, 2004, p. 76-77). According to Mahama (1987; 2004) and Staniland (1957), the four kingmakers might have preferred Ya Na Gungobili's youngest son, Zangina (who had no chieftaincy title unlike two of his elder brothers), to assume the namship. Fearing a civil conflict arising from their decision, the kingmakers secretly consulted with Na-yiri (overlord of Mamprusi) to intervene, affirm their decision and mitigate its fallouts. The request was settled with a proverb competition among the claimants, although many bribes were paid (Staniland, 1975). The Na-yiri was successful in his pursuit and Zangina's selection was confirmed. The Na-yiri



added further to the criteria that only the son of a former YaNa who ascends the skins of Mion (Mionlana), Karaga (Karaga Na) and Savelugu (Yo Na) are eligible for the namship (Staniland, 1975, p. 20). In Dagbon's history, two Gbon Lanans (regents) have, under extraordinary circumstances, become Ya Na (Ladouceur, 2006, p. 99-100).

Ahorsu (2014) chronicles a 19th-century event as the original precursor to the current crisis. Two half-brothers, Princes Abudu and Andani, waged an armed battle over their father, Ya Na Yakubu I (1824-1849). The princes prevailed over their father in the battle but spared his life to continue his rule until he died in 1849. The princes had ascended the skins of Mion and Savelugu, positioning either to claim the namship. Prince Abudu (then Mion Lana) was enskinned in 1850 as Ya Na Abudulai I. Ya Na Abudulai I died in 1876 and his half-brother (Yo-Na Andani) succeeded him as Ya Na Andani II and died in 1899 (Staniland, 1975, p. 19). These late 19th-century events effectively laid the foundation of rotation between the two royal lineages (Abudu and Andani) from 1824 (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 225) until breaches in 1954.

In 1948, when Ya Na Mahama II (an Andani) died, he was succeeded by Ya Na Mahama Bla III (an Abudu) (Issifu, 2015) although the demised Ya Na's son (Gbon Lana Andani) contested the namship (Ladouceur, 1972, p.100). The rotation system was breached following the demise of Ya-Na Mahama Bla III in 1953. Per the rotation rules, an Andani (Mion Lana Andani, who was unsuccessful in the 1948 contest) was next in line for the namship. However, the Abudu gate extended their dynasty with the selection of Ya Na Abudulai III (Abudu, and eldest son of the Ya Na Mahama Bla III) in 1954, thus denying the Andanis their turn (Ladouceur, 1972, p. 100), and raising tension in Yendi. The Andani family, led by Mion Lana Andani, petitioned Ghana's first Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, to request his intervention to restore the rotation system. He argued that the failure of an Andani to become Ya Na, and by extension, his sons, would close the Andani gate's claim to the namship. (Ladouceur, 1972, p. 105). According to Staniland (1975) and Ladouceur (1972), central government intervention permeates the Yendi crisis. Some officials in Nkrumah's government sympathetic to the Andani family, led by J.H. Alhassani, argued Ya Na Abudulai III's selection was invalid because he never occupied the skins of Karaga, Mion and Savelugu. Alhassani also intimated the Ya Na had physical defects (blindness in an eye and six toes) that customarily barred him from becoming a Ya Na.

Acting on the complaint, a government committee subsequently found Ya Na Abudulai III enskinment invalid but advised against destoolment – an act alien to Dagbon tradition. The government and the two families discussed a settlement to grant Mion Lana's sons' eligibility to claim the Yendi namship upon his death; a return to the rotation system; and natural justice for the Andanis to claim the namship twice after the demise of the Ya Na Abudulai III. The Nkrumah government was later overthrown in a military coup in 1966 and a subsequent return to civilian rule (1969-1972).

The two families' alignments to the era's political tradition and central government interferences weaken the Nkrumah government's settlement. Following the death of Ya Na Abudulai III in 1967 (Tonah, 2012, p. 7), the Mion Lana Andani's claim to the namship was announced by divided kingmakers. Gbon Lana Mahamadu Abdulai (19-year-old son of the deceased Ya-Na, with no chieftaincy title from the three qualifying communities) was also proposed by a divided election committee. After a series of machinations, the Mion Lana prevailed and was enskinned as Ya Na Andani III. There were protests from the Abudu side (see Staniland, 1975, p. 152-153) claiming that his enskinment was not carried out per custom. The Mate Kole Committee was set up to look into the Yendi affairs. Ya Na Andani III was asked not to make new chieftaincy appointments until the determination of the matter. He survived for only four months, dying in 1969. Subsequently, the committee invalidated his enskinment posthumously, declared Gbon Lana Mahama properly selected and ordered his enskinment (Staniland, 1975, p. 162-163). The implication of the Mate Kole Committee's findings was that Ya Na Andani III was 'never' a Ya Na; thus his sons cannot be future Ya Nas. He could not be buried in the palace and according to tradition (Ladouceur, 1972, p. 102-112). The forcible removal of the Andani family from the palace resulted in deaths and destruction (Staniland, 1975, p. 163-164).

The overthrow of the civilian regime in 1972 by the military-backed National Liberation Movement renewed the Andani family's agitation. The Ollenu Committee was set up to investigate the Yendi affairs (Ahorsu, 2014, p. 107). The committee upheld the enskinment of Ya Na Andani III as valid and ordered his re-burial. The rotation system and kingmakers' selection role were also confirmed. However, it invalidated Ya Na Mahamadu Abudulai IV's selection and ordered the kingmakers to select a new Ya Na. Thus, Na Yakubu Andani II, the son of the former Ya Na Andani III, was installed (Staniland, 1975, p. 175). The 'novel' destoolment of Ya Na Mahamadu Abudulai IV "by virtue of central government intervention" (ibid, 176) undercuts the custom and tradition of Dagbon in which a Ya Na cannot be deposed. The deposed Ya Na's legal actions to remove his successor, Ya Na Yakubu Andani II, were unsuccessful at the Supreme Court. The court upheld the findings of the Ollenu Committee with the only edict that "all persons who have ever occupied the Nam of Yendi shall without regard to how they ceased to be Ya Na be regarded as former Ya Nas" (Mahama, 1987, p. 442-443) signaling that the deposed Ya Na's sons could indeed claim the namship. The supreme court's edict, Mahama (1987) contends, created further confusion because the position of a living "former Ya Na" is alien to Dagombas (p. 443). Later, a government mediation panel met the factions in the case, resulting in an MOU in which both parties committed to respecting the ruling of the supreme court (Owusu-Mensah, 2022, p. 8). The (deposed) "former Ya-Na" died in 1988 at his private residence and attempts to perform his funeral as "Ya Na" proved a challenge due to

two reasons. Firstly, per custom, the mortal remains of a deceased Ya Na who dies outside the Gbewa Palace cannot be brought to the palace for burial. Secondly, there was no precedent in Dagbon to sustain the burial of a “Ya Na” when the palace was occupied by a reigning Ya Na (Ahorsu, 2014, p. 107). The Abudu family judged the disinterest of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II in paving the way for the funeral of the “former Ya-Na” as renegeing on the MOU (Owusu-Ansah, 2022, p. 8).

Subsequently, a new political dispensation in 2000 brought a renewed focus to the about 200 years of internecine conflict in Dagbon (Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011, p. 3). The 2002 elections, won by the New Patriotic Party (NPP), which analysts assert had ardent supporters in the Abudu family, renewed the tensions in Dagbon (Tonah, 2012, p. 8). The Abudu family pressed home demands for the performance of the funeral of the deceased “former Ya Na” Mahamudu Abudulai IV (Issifu & Bukari, 2021, p. 226). The Bolin Lana (Abudu chief and considered a rival of the current Ya Na) acted in ways that undermined the authority of the Ya Na Yakubu Andani II (Tonah, 2012, p.8). For instance, between February and March 2002, the Bolin Lana’s quest to celebrate Ed-al Adha and the Bugum festival was deemed provocative since it was only the Ya Na who superintended over such celebrations (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 226). The Bolin Lana also enskinned chiefs which undermined the exclusive powers of the Ya Na (MacGaffey, 2006, p. 86). In addition, an elder of the Ya Na was attacked by some Abudu youth in Yendi, leading to a direct “war” (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p.226) between supporters of the two families from 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> March 2002. Ya Na Yakubu Andani III was murdered, his body dismembered and burnt (MacGaffey, 2006, p. 88) alongside 30 others (Albert, 2004, p. 52; Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 227) on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2002. Ahorsu and Gebe (2011) put the number of murdered others at 40 (p. 3). The Gbewa palace was torched, 38 houses destroyed (MacGaffey, 2006, p. 88), the rights of people abused, and properties worth millions of cedis destroyed during the conflict. The Ghanaian government reportedly spent about \$9 million in 2002 alone to maintain peace and order in Dagbon (Issifu, 2015; Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 227). On 25<sup>th</sup> May 2002, the President established the Wuaku Commission of Inquiry, headed by a retired Supreme Court Justice, to investigate events leading to the violence, identify persons responsible for the violence and make pronouncements on ways to deal with the protracted conflict (Owusu-Ansah, 2022, p. 103). In 2003, the CEC was also established to mediate the conflict. The CEC issued a roadmap to peace in 2006, but it was partially implemented due to lingering disagreements and withdrawals by the two families (ibid). The stalled CEC proceedings resumed and by 2018, a final peace agreement was presented to the president. The conflict was deemed resolved with the installation of Ya Na Abukari II from the Andani family in January 2019 and the expectation that the following Ya Na will be selected from the Abudu family, thus confirming the rotation system of selection.

An essential feature of the dispute resolution mechanism is the collaboration of a constellation of actors, hence a hybrid dispute resolution mechanism. This is briefly examined in the next sub-chapter.

## **2.5 Towards Hybrid Orders: Diverse Actors in the Dagbon Chieftaincy Dispute Resolution Affairs**

The peace process in Dagbon was constructed around a constellation of actors from state and non-state sectors. They included the government, traditional authority and the third sector (WACSI, 2011, p. 3, Issifu & Bukari, 2022). The collaboration between these actors and their reliance on liberal and local values to address the Dagbon conflict has been referred to as domesticated hybridity (Paloo & Issifu, 2021 & Issifu & Bukari, 2022). This overview sets the context for discussing the hybrid dispute resolution orders utilised in Dagbon, a conceptual reflection of which will be given in chapter 3.

### **2.5.1 The Role of the Ghanaian State**

The history of the Ghanaian State's role in the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis is often chequered. Central government intervention and complicity have protracted the crisis (see Laudoceur, 1972; MacGaffey, 2006; Staniland, 1975), achieved little success, or worsened the crisis (Bukari et al., 2022). The two royal families of Dagbon (Abudu and Andani) are aligned with the prevailing political traditions of Ghana, and they have sought to use their political connections to manipulate the succession process (Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011, p. 18). The Ghanaian State as a liberal actor, securitised the peace process, investigated the incident and collaborated with other actors to resolve the conflict. The liberal roles of the Ghanaian State revolved around two main issues: securitisation and reliance on formal judicial processes such as the commission of inquiries.

Firstly, concerning securitization, before the 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> March 2002 "war", a contingent of police and army officers were deployed to Dagbon to manage the rising tensions, but to no success. In the violence that later ensued, the State imposed a state of emergency in the area. The army and police contingent were beefed up to protect lives and properties and undertake conflict management (Issifu, 2015, p. 34-35). Issifu & Bukari (2022) contend that the security role of the state is 'liberal', influenced by Western peacemaking mechanisms, indicating further that the securitised order provided the enabling environment for the other liberal (third sector) and traditional actors to address the conflict (p. 228).

Subsequently, the judicial role of the State was activated based on the public uproar that greeted the news of a “3-day war” in a modern state. Ghanaians called for an impartial, independent investigation. The government established the Wuaku Commission of Inquiry based on Constitutional Instrument 2002 (C.I 36) to “investigate the disturbance” (Issifu, 2015, p. 35; Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011, p.3). The 3-member commission was headed by a retired justice of the Supreme Court, Issac Newton Kweku Wuaku. The principal finding of the commission was that Abudu fighters murdered Ya Na Yakubu Andani II. The commission also found national security lapses and political maneuverings by some government operatives aligned with the Abudu faction (Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011, p. 18-19). Accordingly, the commission identified some perpetrators of the murders and violence and recommended their arrest and prosecution (Issifu, 2015, p. 35). The commission’s work is a liberal order based on a formal judicial process inspired by Western peace ideology, alien to Dagbon customary practices (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 227).

### **2.5.2 The Role of Traditional Actors**

As a novelty, the Government of Ghana introduced an element of cultural diplomacy to resolve the Dagbon succession conflict (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 230). The government, in 2003, constituted a 3-member Committee of Eminent Chiefs (CEC), headed by Otumfour Osei Tutu II (the King of Ashanti), to use traditional mechanisms to mediate the conflict and bring lasting peace to Dagbon. After deliberations and disagreements between the two families, the committee produced a 5-point “Roadmap to Peace” on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006 (Issifu, 2015, p. 35). The ‘roadmap’ included the burial of the murdered chief; the enskinment of a Gbonlana (reagent); the funeral of the former Ya Na Mahamadu Abdullai IV (deskinning in the 1970s, died in 1988); the funeral of the murdered Ya Na; and the selection and enskinment of a new Ya Na. (Tonah, 2012, p. 9). Nearly a decade after the issuance of the ‘roadmap’, only the burial rites of the murdered Ya Na and the installation of the Gbonlana had taken place due to disagreements. (ibid, p. 9). The Final Roadmap addressed the root cause of the conflict as well as the frozen provisions in the initial Roadmap to Peace. It was presented to the President of Ghana on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018, culminating in Ya Na Abukari II (Andani lineage) installation in January 2019 (Bukari & Issifu 2022, p. 231-233). Here, the liberal orders of the state, in terms of the security it provided, created the needed ambience for a traditional actor (CEC) to mediate the conflict and perform the installation rites for the new Ya Na. The CEC’s work represents a traditional peace mechanism based on its use of indigenous African dispute resolution processes such as mediation, rituals, and a win-win-minded outcome in conformity to the customary rites of Dagbon (Issifu & Asante, 2016).

### **2.5.3 The Role of Third-Sector Actors**

The third sector is used as a generic term to refer to non-state and not-for-profit actors ranging from “civil society to the business sector, including associations, voluntary organizations, foundations, cooperatives, mutual organizations, social enterprises, etc.” (Cejudo-García et al. 2021, p. 1) who contribute to socio-economic development in a country.

In Dagbon, third-sector actors from international and local sources contributed to the peace process. Actors with liberal and local values collaborated to resolve the conflict. For example, the UNDP office in Accra provided technical and financial support to the government and the CEC to address the conflict (UNDP, n.d, p.2). In addition, other specialized UN agencies with liberal orientation collaborated and provided funds for programs of faith-based organisations such as the Tamale Archdiocese of the Catholic Church (Interview, 2), community-based organisations (Interview 1), and women groups such as WIPM (Interview, 14) to facilitate negotiation and reconciliatory efforts among Abudus and Andanis. CBOs undertook advocacy and peace campaigns in their communities and mediated localised Abudu-Andani-related conflicts in small communities. The Peace Council in the Northern Region and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) equally facilitated mediation and negotiation efforts. The Catholic Relief Services also provided humanitarian assistance to people displaced during the conflict (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 230). Third-sector actors are reliable in mitigating conflicts because they provide a viable platform that brings different groups and systems together and are considered impartial (Issifu, 2017, p. 6). Issifu & Bukari (2022) describe the role of the third-sector in peace mechanisms as both liberal and local. They trace the origin of third-sector activities to Western ideology but explain that some CBOs maintain their local roots. Hence, third-sector actors in Dagbon straddle the liberal-local peace paradigms.

### **2.6 Chapter Conclusion**

The chapter provided a background into the WPS agenda and its low progress in gender mainstreaming peace processes in Africa. In discussing chieftaincy and conflict, the chapter unpacked the underlying causes of succession conflicts in Ghana. The articulation of the Dagbon society through its socio-cultural practices helps frame power and gender relations issues that, in turn, limit women's participation in decision-making. Furthermore, the historical analysis of the conflict demonstrated how social change, political interference and maneuverings protracted the conflict and its

resolution. Finally, the discussion on the actors in the hybrid framework, their role and orientation (liberal or local) motivates further conceptualisation of peace hybridity.

### **3 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND**

This chapter presents the theories and concepts that underpin this research. The overarching goal of this study is to comprehend women's practical participation in the nature and form of the dispute resolution process for the Dagbon's chieftaincy conflict affairs. In this regard, hybrid peace governance adequately captures the shape and character of the Dagbon conflict resolution process. Hybridity as an analytical framework enables a clear explanation of the nature and form of dispute resolution mechanism applied to the Dagbon conflict. The study also attempts to unpack the social and cultural factors that limit the participation of groups, particularly women, in the Dagbon peace process. Conventional gender and peace theories (essentialism, constructionism and patriarchy) that investigate women's participation in peace and theories that contest these conventional explanations will be examined. The chapter begins by explaining hybrid peace governance, its intellectual foundations, and its application and problems in conflict settings. Second, it discusses the advantages and disadvantages of hybrid peace before demonstrating the domesticated hybridity used in the Dagbon instance. Second, insights into gender and peace are developed using the concepts of essentialism, social constructionism and patriarchy, which aid in unraveling the push-and-pull factors for women in localised peace. Finally, I justify how hybrid peace governance informs the present study on Dagbon's homegrown hybrid dispute resolution mechanisms. Gender essentialist and social construction arguments provide a lens to explain women's engagement in localized peace and the contestations of their engagements thereof.



### 3.1 Hybrid Peace Governance

The concept of hybridity appears in major and subfields of the biological and social sciences, but its use in peace studies is only recently emerging (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 397, Kent et al., 2018, p. 1). Scholars argue a hybrid state, in which various systems – illiberal and liberal, formal and informal, traditional and non-traditional, international and local – interact to ensure statehood has been seen throughout Africa (Bagayoko, Hutchful & Luckham, 2016, p. 1; Albrecht, 2019, cited in Paloo & Issifu, 2021, p. 409; Bagayoko, Hutchful & Luckham, 2016). According to Scheye (2008), although post-colonial States are increasingly becoming formalised, 'non-state systems' continue to deliver public goods as complementary to the formal State (cited in Bagayoko et al., 2016, p. 1). The modern and traditional states, hybrid states, often clash and implode, yet collaborate to construct a hybrid peace architecture for post-conflict reconstruction (Richmond, 2015, p. 50-59).

A hybrid governance system refers to state and non-state collaboration and overlap in state-building (South, 2018, p. 53). Hybrid peace governance, in contrast, refers to the interaction of liberal and traditional values and systems to bring about peace in conflict settings (Belloni, 2012, p. 22). When applied to address communal violence, hybridity in peace processes refers to a state-traditional collaboration, thereby a home-grown liberal-local mechanism to resolve disputes in local communities (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p. 222). Formal state structures (liberal) and informal (traditional) governance processes have interacted, engaged, negotiated, and collaborated in colonial and post-colonial state-building affairs in Africa (Albrecht, 2019, cited in Paloo & Issifu, 2021, p. 409), but these collaborations are not without contestations. In Timor-Leste and Vanuatu, there are competing claims about construing justice as a sole liberal instrument or walking the “customary” justice processes side-by-side with liberal values in the post-conflict state-building efforts (Simangan, 2018, p. 1528). The competing claims between the local and international peace interventions have resulted in critical peace scholars' argument that liberal processes post high failure rates (Simangan, 2018, p.1525, Richmond, 2015, p. 56; Belloni, 2012, p. 21). The shift towards local peace approaches to address conflicts is amplifying; however, the 'local or tradition' peace is also problematic, and its effectiveness is romanticised (Richmond, 2009, p. 152) because it perpetuates structural inequality and rebuffs external interventions (from the global North) to resolve endemic conflicts (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, p. 764). Therefore, the peacemaking swing is moving towards mixing strategies to achieve “emancipatory peace” devoid of excessive external interventionism’ (Visoka & Richmond, 2017, p. 112), hence hybrid peace processes.

The emergence of hybridity in peace processes is a relatively recent endeavour in the critical peace field. Its academic theorising blossomed between 2009-2010

through the works of Roger Mac Ginty, Oliver Richmond (McLeod, 2015, p. 50), “Kevin Clements, Volker Boege, Anne Brown, Wendy Foley and Anna Nolan” (Richmond, 2018, p. vii). The ‘hybrid turn’ recognises the shortfalls of liberal/international and local/traditional peace processes, actors, and systems. It pursues a collaboration that leverages the strengths of each while minimising their weaknesses, ensuring that the interest of the ‘local’ is legitimately preserved in peace outcomes (Richmond, 2013, p. 271-272). Hybrid peace governance primarily emerged from the failings of liberal peace norms to establish sustainable peace in non-western contexts (Brown, p.2018, 21; Paffenholz, 2015, p. 859; Petterson, 2012, p. 9). MacGinty asserts hybridity of peace processes is a response to the liability of liberal peace. He makes four crucial arguments about the limitations of the liberal peace process, thus urging the need for a paradigm shift. Firstly, Mac Ginty argues liberal peace fails to stamp out the inequities that the imposition of the market and democratic systems confront local populations with. Secondly, the ‘liberal turn’ suffers from a “crisis of confidence” as it suffers a reversal of perceived gains over time because the ‘peace’ it delivers is mostly short-lived, hence unsustainable. Thirdly, the peace outcome designed by a few people invites non-compliance and low/no engagement from the local population, who feel their values and agency are alienated from the peace process. Fourthly, the objectives of liberal peace may be short-changed by powerful actors who impose their variety of liberal peace (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 7). The ‘local and traditional’ peace option is not without controversy either (Simangan, 2018, p.1525). For example, it is fraught with challenges of exclusion, the perpetuation of unequal power relations in society (Mount, 2018, p. 216), and the disregard for the rule of law (Mac Ginty, 2011). Hence, hybrid peace promotes the utilisation of local resources and agency and strengthens the legitimacy and acceptance of peace processes, particularly in non-western contexts (Mac Ginty, 2011; Simanga, 2018, p. 1526). Based on the internal weaknesses of ‘local peace’, Simanga (2018) argues local peace methods cannot divorce themselves from exogenous influences (p. 1528).

The definition of hybrid peace governance varies as there are no clear-cut boundaries to hybrid peace in practice (Simanga, 2018, p. 1527, Richmond, 2015, p. 53). Hybrid peace governance is a peacebuilding system that encourages collaboration among multiple actors who set objectives and develop processes for engaging conflict parties and maintaining peace in areas affected by conflicts. Hybrid peace governance recognizes the complexity of present conflicts and the need for diverse actors, stressing context-based local capacities and rituals that collaborate with liberal norms to achieve long-term peace (Richmond, 2015, p. 52). According to Jarstad and Belloni (2012), hybridity in peace processes is “a condition where liberal and illiberal norms, institutions, and actors coexist, interact, and even clash” (p.22). Simangan (2018) explains hybridity

encapsulates the activities and “role of external or international (often assumed to be liberal) and local actors and perspectives” (p. 1525), while Richmond (2015) illustrates hybrid peace as the straddle, i.e., a “juxtaposition between international norms and interest and local forms of agency and identity” (p. 50). Stressing on the characteristics of engagements (Boege, 2018) explains hybridity is about peace strategies that “co-exist, overlap, interact and intertwine in conflict-affected areas” (p.86). The definitions of hybrid peace processes present it as a ‘descriptive concept’ and a ‘prescriptive’ phenomenon (Simangan, 2018, p. 1525-1526). As a descriptive term, the activities of external and internal actors with liberal and local ideologies are considered. Also, as a prescriptive, hybridity pursues local realities as integral in the architecture that international and state-level actors develop for peace. Thus, hybridity is a merger and a contest of ‘exogenous and indigenous’ processes to address a conflict (Mac Ginty, 2010, p. 392).

Conceptually, hybrid peace processes are often difficult to capture due to the interplays and negotiations at stake (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 396). Maiangwa & Suleiman’s (2017) summary of Roger Mac Ginty’s work on the hybridity of peace processes presents four features of the hybrid approach. Firstly, hybrid peace encourages multiple actors to collaborate and develop a peace objective. Secondly, actors’ collaborations aim to stop violence and engender stability by decisively healing trauma. Thirdly, the process utilises a range of resources from external sources (international interests) and internal sources (national and locally-placed resources). Fourthly and finally, the exchanges and interplays are somewhat fluid and non-linear (p. 7-8), thereby not privileging one peace orientation over the other. Mac Ginty also presents a conceptual model based on four variables to understand hybrid peace. Firstly, liberal institutions can devise ‘compliance mechanisms’, including the use or threats of use of force to prevent a breakdown of the peace. Then, there are incentives such as representation in power and economic schemes through democratic practices and market policies. Thirdly, the recognition that local forces and actors can set aside liberal interventions and negotiate their peace outcome, hence onboarding of local actors and interests. The fourth variable is that local actors can propose locally-inspired alternatives for their course of action, hence local ownership and participation (Mac Ginty, 2011, p. 389-404; Simangan, 2018, p.1529-1530). These variables lead Ryan and Basini’s (2017) conclusion thus ‘hybridity is not a tool to be instrumentalised’ but to assess the outcome of their use (p. 187).

Peace hybridity has received a modest uptick in coverage at different levels worldwide, and peace scholars have documented hybrid peace initiatives in post-conflict settings. It has been applied to international-local collaboration to bring other social groups into the peacemaking process to strengthen the process and utilise local

agencies (Brown, 2018, p. 30). For example, the Bougainville peace process saw international efforts interface with local practices to become hybrid through “mixing, re-converting, leaching and blending” (Boege, 2018, p. 115-116), demonstrating that peace can be achieved through interactions of the two predominant peacebuilding approaches. The extent of hybridity in Bougainville is widely documented in the hybrid peace literature (see Boege, 2018; Nicole, 2018). In the post-conflict rebuilding efforts in which the Bougainville state structures and institutions were weak after the violent conflict, local reconciliation ceremonies and rituals (spiritual) were undertaken by elders to resolve the violence alongside the UN and international organisations. In contrast, the state was supported to find its space (Anam, 2015, p. 43).

Similarly, Belloni (2012) posits that the limited application of competitive politics (liberal democracy) in Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania, alongside the promotion and inclusion of customary values and processes into the rebuilding of the post-conflict states, has strengthened both the state and local institutions (p. 24) due to their embrace of hybrid peace processes. For example, in Rwanda, the traditional Gracaca Courts system (customary conflict resolution practices) was incorporated as part of the States justice delivery system (p. 26) and codified into the national constitution. Further, Mac Ginty (2011) submitted a hybrid peace arrangement in Afghanistan which saw state-building modeled on liberal structures (p.406) under the watch of the US and NATO (western partners more broadly) while the *loya jirga* (the judicial system) was modelled on customary judicial processes (Belloni, 2012, p. 26). George (2018) documents the application of local and international mediation initiatives to address, to some extent, the violent conflict in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville. Supported by international efforts, alongside state-building and securitisation, customary meditation rituals and peacebuilding efforts interfaced to address the conflicts in the two Pacific countries (p. 1338-1347).

Furthermore, Paloo and Issifu (2021) contend hybrid peace processes can be de-internationalised to solve communal violence. Referring to the outcome of de-internationalisation as “domesticated, homegrown hybridity”, they assert that the liberal institutions of a state (for example, judiciary and security) and traditional authorities (chiefs) collaborate to explore a source of order initially not available to the State (Brown, 2018) to address communal conflicts. For instance, the Ghanaian State’s promotion of cultural diplomacy through the CEC, supported by a body of compulsive security systems to enforce the agenda of the CEC, and the role of third-sector actors in resolving the Dagbon chieftaincy is a homegrown dispute resolution mechanism, hence homegrown hybridity.

The verdict on the hybridity of peace processes is mixed. In praise of hybridity, Richmond (2015) reveal it decolonises peace intervention to highlight local peoples’

interpretation of everyday peace. In the process, hybridity encourages local ownership of the peace process while being critical of injustice in the local milieu, which can result in negative peace (p.52). Anam (2015) holds that hybrid peace delivers sustainable peace because local interest interacts with liberal processes to deal with violence in contexts where the state's structures have broken down and violence is the order (p. 42). The insistence and welcome of the 'local' strengthen the durability of the peace process because the people identify with it and; thus, view it as legitimate and inclusive (ibid, 43). According to Belloni (2012), collaborators of the hybrid governance can tap into local agencies and resources hence strengthening "informal legitimacy" (p. 24).

As a consequence of hybrid peace limitations, negative and positive hybrid peace (Visoka and Richmond call positive hybrid "emancipatory peace") have emerged (Simanga, 2018, Visoka & Richmond, 2017, p. 111, Richmond, 2015. p. 51). Richmond (2015) describes a hybrid peace architecture as negative when it exhibits characteristics of imposition of external and 'modern' values, thus "represents the outsourcing of power and norms from the international to the state or society" (p.51). It also reflects the neglect of power imbalances that exist in a social milieu where peace hybridity is introduced (p.51). Further, negative hybrid peace leaves the coercive and oppressive mechanisms intact and gives more significant advantages to the privileged few (Simangan, 2018, p. 1528). On the other hand, positive hybrid peace recognises and taps into local agencies and capacities. It results from international and local collaboration attentive to the local milieu and addresses "broader political and social injustice" (Richmond, p. 51). Thus, positive peace takes account of a broader representation of the interests of the people who interface with the hybrid processes, including their local realities and rituals about rights, justice, peace and development (ibid, p.62-63). Simanga (2018) addresses the evidence of negative peace in Cambodia peace. In which the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) conducted somewhat democratic elections seen to guarantee peace in Cambodia. The election processes and security and administrative support represent the liberal logic of the hybrid process. However, the elites in Cambodia saw the elections as an exercise that legitimises the power of the elite and the patronage system without really offering true democracy to Cambodia. The mismatch in values between expectations of liberal democracy promoted by the international community and a process that reflects the people's power and desires depicts negative hybrid peace (p. 1531-1532) that favoured the patronage networks in Cambodia.

Research into gendered assumptions in hybrid peace governance is recently emerging (Ryan and Basini, 2017, p. 187-188). Feminist scholars such as McLeod (2015) have called for gender-focus studies on hybrid peace processes, maintaining that peace forms (including hybrid peace) reflect a power imbalance in which men start

conflicts but a limited peace decision and participation space exist for women (p. 52). Other scholars stress that binaries – local/international, liberal/illiberal, etc. – do not adequately address differences of all forms in society (de Almagro, 2018, p. 321; Nadarajah & Rampton, 2014, p. 50); hence a lens that understands the differences at play could strengthen hybrid peace theorizing. For instance, Nicole and Kent (2017) argue that feminists find hybridity ‘contradictory’ and are simultaneously ‘skeptical’ about liberal (p. 529) and traditional approaches to peacebuilding. De Almagro’s (2018) study into women and hybrid process offers critical insights into hybridity in peace processes in which the UN, international NGOs, a public national dialogue framework and local NGOs collaborate with local women clubs (engagement emphasis difference of culture and values) to address Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (p. 329). Furthermore, Cyan and Basini (2017) have utilised Mac Ginty’s four variable models to understand ‘who’ and ‘how’ women in Liberia and Sierra Leone participated in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 into National Action Plans (NAPs). They found the ‘who’ encapsulates a broad section of primarily international NGOs and CSOs who write handbooks and training manuals on how NAP can be developed. These international NGOs and CSOs then require local women groups to advocate for the passage of the NAP. On the other hand, the ‘how’ are usually a convergence of NGOs and CSOs with human rights and liberal values inclination, excluding local voices and interests (p.192-199). Nicole (2018) also makes an essential contribution to women and hybrid peace processes, arguing the *‘interplay between the liberal and the local can be enabling for women in some conflict-related contexts but constrain their activities in others’* (p. 1339) hence the need for context-specific study of women’s participation in the hybrid peace process. Based on her studies into the international-local peace collaboration in Solomon Island and Bougainville, Nicole found that in the Solomon Islands, the hastily mediated, ‘security-first’ settlements by international operatives and the State, without women’s participation in the process nor provisions for their interest in the 2000 Townsville Peace Agreement exacerbated the insecurity and tensions in the Island. The absence of ‘vernacular security’ (how local people construe security and peace based on their everyday realities) and the obscurity of women and civil society actors in the process resulted in continued insecurity (p. 1338-1339). However, in the Bougainville peace process, the international community’s recognition of women’s networks, faith and the local’s regard for matrilineality (including that women were guardians and protectors of the earth, hence did not want to see its destruction) enabled women to apply ‘vernacular security’ to mediate the conflict through customary rituals and catholicism, therefore enhancing the hybrid peace process there (p.1343-1345).

Aside from the lack of gender focus, hybrid peace governance preserves structural inequality, unequal power relations, and marginalization (Simanga, 2018, p.

1528), particularly during state-traditional authority collaborations in Africa (Paloo & Issifu, 2021, p. 415). Ryan and Helen (2017) suggest that a section of the local population, especially women, do not participate in peace hybridity due to power relations. Mac Ginty's work on hybridity is criticized for curtailing homogeneity, generalising the peacemaking process, and glossing over the varieties of power and how they affect gender relations (Ryan & Helen, 2017, p. 190 & 201). Furthermore, Belloni (2012) emphasise that hybridity should put forms and institutions alongside each other rather than stress on traditional peace processes since what is perceived as 'local' may serve the social order, its hierarchy, and exclusionary realities (p. 33). The criticism against hybridity for preserving the status quo in local communities, mainly the women's exclusion from the peace space, triggers more theoretical understanding of gender and peace.

### 3.2 Theorising Gender and Peace

Gender affects every social reality, including conflict and peace. A conceptualisation of gender is challenging due to the "*prejudices, myth and outright falsehood*" associated with the concept. Gender manifestations are also different across societies (Connel, 2009, p. X) and their relationship to war and peace (Tessler, Nachtwey & Grant, 1999, p. 520). Caprioli (2000) argues that gender defines the basis of access and power in society, hence its importance in understanding how inequality is perpetuated and maintained (p. 54). According to Caprioli and Boyer (2000), gender is "the dichotomy between men and women" (p. 504). Holme (2007) contends sociologists distinguish sex, i.e., the difference in biological features between men and women, from gender, which refers to socially produced qualities and expectations associated with being a man or woman (p. 2) in a given society. The social constructs of gender also establish standards of rules, acceptable behaviour and access to power differently for men and women. However, women are almost always disadvantaged (Pankhurst, 2000, p. 10). In times of war and peace, the long-held imagery in many societies suggests that "*women work for peace, and men wage war*" (Caprioli & Boyer, 2000, p. 503; Pankhurst, 2000, p. 5). There are considerations that women exhibit more aversion to violence than men; they lower power gains while men maximise power for personal gain. Also, they are considered to work for a more equal and just society, whereas men are competitive. According to Tessler et al. (1999), prevailing views in international affairs are that "women are more pacific than men" with how they address international disputes (p. 520). These views about gender and peace arrive at one conclusion: women are peaceful and work for the peace disturbed by conflictual men (Caprioli & Boyer, 2000, p. 504-505).

Feminist theories for explaining conflict and peace vary as each presents a distinct explanation of the phenomenon; however, all agree on the utility of conceptualising women's participation in conflict and peacebuilding (Caprioli & Boyer, 2000, p. 503). Scholars have advanced several claims about the relationship between women and peace. For example, Melander (2005) posits that a central view of feminists' scholarship on conflict and peace is that societies with low levels of gender hierarchies are less likely to experience collective violence since women participate in matters that reduce tension (p. 695-696). Caprioli (2000) also argues that domestic gender equality in a country is a marker of peaceful political relations within and between other states. Krause, Krause and Bränfors (2018) opine that peace negotiations where women are participants are likely to hold for a long time; hence the peace is sustainable (p.999).

Other feminist theorists within the critical peace field also view the conflict resolution space as mirroring the domination and power of men in society (McLeod, 2015) since conflict resolution mechanisms '*valorize the behavior of men* to the exclusion of women (Sharoni, 2017, p.3). Sharon (2017) submits the belief that the conflict resolution space is male-centered fuels the advocacy for gender mainstreaming in the field. Feminists challenge the conflict resolution field by theorising in war-affected countries (p. 3). The work of feminist scholars has brought to the fore the two competing concepts of gender essentialism and gender constructionism to conceptualise women's contribution and limitations in peacebuilding (Skjelsbaek, 2001, p. 3). Next, I will discuss these two concepts and their implications for understanding women's role in peacebuilding in more detail.

### **3.2.1 Gender Essentialism**

Gender essentialism generally explains the unique biological qualities in women (Skjelsbaek, 2001, p. 2) that influence their attitudes and behaviour in a given situation. When applied to conflict and peace, essentialism explores the distinction between men's and women's responses and orientation to violence and peace (Tessler et al., 1999, p.520). Gender essentialists in conflict and peace studies contend that women exude qualities that make them averse to violence and have the skills to resolve conflicts peacefully (Melander, 2005). The performance of women's biological duty (reproduction) and their subsequent experience of motherhood demonstrate a relationship between gender and pacifism which places women in a unique position to contribute to peace. Tessler et al. (1999) have indicated that women's domestic role, namely the caregiving role imbues love and a desire to transform violence (p. 521). Gender essentialists further argue that women participants in peace negotiations calm



the nerves of the conflict parties through a dynamic, pacifist, and compromising stances than men (Maoz, 2009, p. 519, Tesla et al., 1999, p. 521-522).

Similarly, women's use of motherhood contributes to peace efforts because mothers care for children (Skjelsbaek, 2001, p. 4-5), educate them against violence and to enhance family and community relations. In moral ethics, men are said to pursue the "morality of justice", namely rights and fairness. In contrast, women's moral compass strives towards responsibility, compassion and care, hence their suitability for peace roles (Carol Gilligan, 1982, cited in Jaggar, 1991, p. 82). For instance, motherhood was applied to lobby leaders of warring factions in the civil war in Liberia (Adjei, 2021, p. 29). Women's (mothers') impartial commitment to listen to the grievances of all parties was a symbolic act that unlocked the peace grid in Liberia (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2013, p. 9).

Hunt and Posa (2001) also argue that the withdrawal or threats of withdrawal of conjugal responsibilities by women compel men in some societies to sit at the peace table. Taken together, gender essentialism in peace and conflict studies is therefore based on the claim that due to the biological role and qualities they exude, women are predisposed to peace and are reliable actors in conflict resolution, hence should be given a seat at the peace table (Maoz, 2009).

The arguments about women's peace skills and qualities have engendered the *women and peace hypothesis*, which can be unpacked through three main arguments. Firstly, proponents of the *women and peace hypothesis* submit that at the macro-level, higher levels of gender equality in any society engender human rights protection and thus reduce the resort to violence. For example, Gizelis (2011) concluded that the higher social capital of Liberian women pushed the conflict parties in the Liberian civil war to reach a peace agreement (p. 506). Relatedly, proponents argue societies with a conducive climate for domestic abuse exhibit high levels of or resort to violence. Secondly, the women and peace hypothesis holds that women are more moderate and compromising than men concerning military exercises (Brouneus, 2014, p. 128). Thirdly, the hypothesis claims that durable peace is achieved when women participate in peace negotiations because their recommendations are welcomed by the belligerent parties (Krause et al., 2018, p. 989).

Notwithstanding its contribution to women and peace studies, gender essentialism is criticized for relying on essentialist notions (Valenius, 2007, p.514), thereby reducing women's agency to attributes of motherhood – a biological function – instead of questioning the unequal power relations and subordination of women prevalent in society (Charlesworth, 2008, p. 358). Also, according to the critiques, essentialists' conceptualisation lumps all women together as mothers, failing critically to distinguish mothers from non-mothers in real life (Zalewski, 1994). Arguing women's attributes

and qualities as predisposed factors for peace uncritically puts them into a homogeneous group with a distinct role in peace processes (Väyrynen, 2010, p. 138), thus narrowing their potential ways to participate in peace efforts. Tessler et al. (1999) assert that essentialism highlights stereotypes that hold women down over time (p. 521). The women-and-peace hypothesis is also misleading as women were combatants in some armed conflicts, such as during the People's War in Nepal from 1996 to 2006 (Steenbergen, 2022). Women's role in some armed conflicts went beyond care (Cohen, 2013, p. 384), thus questioning the generalized assumptions that women are predisposed to peace. The scholar and anthropologist MacGaffey (2013) has referred to a 15th-century battle between a Dagomba chief and a Gonja chief incited by the language of a woman, signaling that women contribute to conflict (cited in Ridwan, 2019, p. 276). Also, women's withdrawal of their conjugal duties and use of gendered language reduced men's stature in society, possibly forcing some men to participate in violence (Pankhurst, 2000, p. 5). For example, in Dagbon, women's use of gendered language contributed to the 2002 crisis (Ridwan, 2019, p. 282). Also, some mothers have often encouraged their children and husbands to participate in conflict (Ruddick, 1989, cited in Skjelsbaek, 2001, p. 14). Essentialist assumptions are often backed by few cases making them universally untrue (Powell, 2016, p. 271-272). In feminist ethics conceptualisation, care is fundamentally associated with women, but the evidence of how women's care is directly correlated with peace remains at large (Jagger, 1991, p. 83). Criticism against essentialist conceptions in peace is provoked by scholars who study how societies construct roles and expectations for women and men and how these roles and expectations influence gender engagement in conflict and peace decisions. Thus, social construction scholarship has been central to theorising social reality regarding gender and peace.

### **3.2.2 Gender and Social Constructionism**

Gender and peace intersect profoundly, and this view continues to drive research in the critical peace field. Stoller (2019) explains that gender is "the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person" in a given society arguing that gender is a cultural element, not biological; thus, social features should become units of analysis for women and peace conceptualisation. The field of social sciences dedicated to examining how ideas and experiences are constructed in society is called social constructionism, with Kenneth Gergen as one of its influential scholars (Stam, 2001, p. 292). In their most influential treatise on social reality construction, Berger and Luckmann (1966) declared "reality is socially constructed", tasking sociologists to investigate the process through which these realities come to being (p. 13). Constructionists generally argue that human experiences and ideas, such as class, gender, wealth, etc., are not

naturally determined but socially constructed (Diaz-Leon, 2015, p. 1137). They assert ideas (mental representations) and objects (their forms and nature) in a given society are not biological but socially constructed products (Hackling, 1999, p. 2) influenced by history and forces in society.

Burr (1995) explains social constructionism sets out to achieve three objectives in feminist scholarship. Firstly, it moves discussions about femininity and masculinity beyond biology and 'inherency' to alternative facts (how society is constructed) on gender differences. Secondly, social constructionism considers social reality about gender differences as occurring differently in time and space; and thirdly, through sustained socialisation and social interactions, men and women are pre-organised because ideas about gender are already produced and sustained (cited in Skjelsbaek, 2001, p.3-4; Stoller, 2019).

Feminists have applied social constructionist tools to analyse gender relations in society (Hackling, 1999, p.7). For instance, one of Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) substantial contributions to feminist scholarship was her book 'The Second Sex' in which she asserted gender is a social construct (Hacking, 1999, p. 7), stimulating further conceptualisations about the social construction of gender. Feminists who apply the social construction of gender lenses to women and peace reject essentialists' notions that the inherent qualities of women should become the focus of understanding women's contribution to peace (Skjelsbaek, 2001, p. 4). Instead, they argue that appreciation of the roles of men and women during conflict is enhanced with the application of social constructionism to how masculinity and femininity are produced and transacted in a given society (Enloe, 1990, p.3, cited in Skjelsbaek, 2001, p. 4). Given the pervasive essentialist notion about the relationship of men and women to peace, the social construction of gender offers feminist scholars another pathway to question essentialist notions about women and peace (Väyrynen, 2010, p. 137).

While essentialists contend when given the opportunity, women will seek peace because it is in their essential nature, constructionists explore the construction of masculinity and femininity and their deployment in conflict contexts (Skjelsbaek, 2001, p.3-4). In her work of deconstructing femininity in the wars in former Yugoslavia, El-Salvador and Vietnam, Skjelsbaek (2001) found varying answers from the gendered aspects of the wars from survivors. In the former Yugoslavia, the disappearance of men from the community was interpreted by women as an act of defense of motherhood – mothers and children subjected to sexual abuse. In the traditional setting, the disappearance of the male population was interpreted as they (men) fighting in defense of women, children and older people (p. 8). Women's romanticised narratives about the war in El Salvador indicated somewhat liberation because they fought alongside men. For women 'combatants', the war represented a liberation from the

gender culture to which they had been accustomed. In Vietnam, narratives of femininity in the war context did not change, although women were mobilised in the conflict. Their military 'contribution' was merely an extension of their traditional roles and reflected conservative femininity (p.13).

Consequently, Capriolo summarises constructionists' arguments simply that no inherent difference exists based on gender, but gender roles are stereotypical (p.54). Where gender inequality exists, the prospect of war is high. Feldman (2004) argues constructionism attempts to draw a line in the sand of assumptions that men have a military mind while women are kind and nurture peace (p. 118-120). In his work on constructionism in peacebuilding, Conteh-Morgan (2005) proposes peacebuilding processes that consider the experiences of ordinary people, including women (p. 84); maintaining this can be derived from the use of constructionism since it provides a lens through which nature of things can be analysed (p.73). The overall argument of social constructionists is that the structure of society and its production of gendered norms, beliefs and assumptions affect women's peace engagements. Hence, a critical investigation into social institutions and practices to understand how male dominance perpetuates the exclusion of women in decision spaces is required, leading to the concept of patriarchy.

### **3.2.3 Patriarchy**

The Latin term "pater," which means "father," is where the word "patriarchy" originates. Thus, patriarchy is loosely translated as the "rule of the father" (Sultana, 2011, p. 2). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines patriarchy as a "social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line "as well as the "control by men of a disproportionately large share of power". Male domination in patriarchal societies is both private (domination of women and children within families) and public (extending and enveloping the whole society with power hierarchically arranged for only men) to the disadvantage of women (Sultana, 2011, p. 2-3).

The patriarchy theory traces its history to the 1960s and 1970s women's movements' quest for analytical tools to assess and explain the basis of male domination over women (Acker, 1989, p. 235; Sultana, 2011, p. 2). Acker (1989) argues that patriarchy emerged in the social sciences to challenge social theories of the time that linked men's domination to natural explanations, including that "men are born to dominate and women to be subordinate" (Sultana, 2011, p. 4) rather than attribute domination to unfair and unequal structural tendencies. For feminists, men's dominance over

women in the economy, family, politics, and religion/culture provides not just the basis for the oppression of women but their violation (Makama, 2013, p.112-117).

In Beechey's (1979) view, feminism and Marxism contributed to patriarchy's evolution as a "coherent theory" to explain women's subjugation and oppression. According to Beechey, these two scholarly camps (feminism and Marxism) focus on different areas of the same problem: men's domination in society (p.66). However, the focus of feminists' analysis, often radical in orientation, is on women's subjugation and men's superiority in society added by social structures and institutions (Walby, 1990, p. 3). Marxist feminists, on the other hand, emphasise men's dominance in the mode of production (the basis of capitalism) and its cascading effects on different social institutions as the starting point for women's subjugation (Walby, 1990, p. 3-4). Men benefit from the economic system in which they wield the most power by exploiting women's labour with care work at home considered no work deserving of remuneration (Sultana, 2011, p. 9).

Patriarchal practices, beliefs and societies have existed almost universally and are woven into their contexts' social, political and economic fabric (Dery, Cuthbert, Nakojah, Segbefia, 2002, p. 94). In many societies, patriarchy is both a micro and macro phenomenon enacted through gender roles, "family and kinship group" (Sultana, 2011, p. 12), and transmitted through socialisation. For example, in Ghanaian families, men exercise leadership over the unit by providing for and making decisions for members. In contrast, women perform auxiliary roles such as caring for and nurturing the children (Sikweyiya, Addo-Lartey, Alnagea, 2020, p. 2). Writing from the Bangladesh context, Sultana (2011) highlights that kinship is patriarchal and the boy is expected to inherit the family's name, with the girl considered almost valueless. Also, after marriage, residences are patrilocal (women stay with their husband's families) indicating the superiority of males over females, hence the high levels of gender inequality in traditional societies in Bangladesh (p. 13). In Nigeria, where nearly half the country's population is women, patriarchal beliefs restrict women to the domestic sphere; hence the kitchen is the only possible and suitable aspiration for women (Makama, 2013, p. 115). Patriarchy is so rooted in societies that the international human rights conventions and protocols instituted for women (Makama, 2013, p. 116) and the national constitutional guarantee of gender equality are mostly paperwork and less reality on the ground (Sultana, 2011, p. 15).

Beechey (1979) explains that patriarchy is a "coherent theory" to analyse the "basis of subordination" experienced by women as well as their forms (p. 66). Therefore, the patriarchy theory presents an explanatory and emancipatory paradigm to understand women's oppression and drive their demand for social change and equity (Acker, 1989, p. 235). However, in Beechey's view, severe and critical problems arise

from the conceptualisation of patriarchy. As Acker (1989) explains, patriarchy de-emphasises the differences in context when it comes to the domination of women in practice. The dominance of women in minority groups may not be the same for middle-class women with political ambitions, for instance in other contexts. Yet, patriarchy is presented as a broad brush that affects women everywhere equally. (p. 235).

The theoretical reflections on gender and peace hold some truths for the Dagbon society. Patriarchal beliefs and norms are rooted in Dagbon's traditional social institutions – political, economic, education, marriage and family, religion, etc. in which male dominance is prevalent. Through socialisation, gendered rules, roles and expectations are handed down, protected and enforced to keep the Dagbon society in “harmony and dynamic balance”, hence social equilibrium (Allen, 1981, p. 234). The influences of patriarchal beliefs and practices on women's engagement in the chieftaincy conflict dispute resolution mechanisms are later discussed in the findings.

### **3.3 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter discussed and articulated the theoretical and conceptual lens through which the study will analyse the situation in Dagbon. Firstly, drawing on hybrid peace governance, the study conceptualises the dispute resolution mechanism in Dagbon as a domestic hybrid process defined as an ‘in-country’ tripartite collaboration involving institutions of the Ghanaian State, the chieftaincy institution and third sector actors to address a chieftaincy succession conflict. The trilateral collaboration straddled liberal-local peace values. To illustrate, the Ghanaian State contributed security and a formal judicial process. The chieftaincy institution contributed traditional peace values such as mediation, rituals, and truth-telling associated with customary processes in Dagbon. The peace dialogue platforms anchored by third-sector actors had doses of local and liberal values. This conceptualisation conforms to Paloo and Issifu's description of the peace process in Dagbon as a “domesticated hybridity” where homegrown liberal and local peace strategies were fused to resolve a non-state conflict. Secondly, based on the scholarship on essentialism in women and peace, the study conceptualises essentialism as context-specific gendered social attributes and references that drive women's engagement in peace. Thirdly social constructionism is conceptualised as a tool for deconstructing gender roles and expectations to understand how they perpetuate and enforce social realities that restrict women's participation in peace work. The conceptualisation of the dispute resolution mechanism in Dagbon as a hybrid order meets the hybrid governance threshold. Firstly, Peterson (2012) asserts that hybridity can be used as a “conceptual tool” (p. 12). Secondly, liberal-local values can apply at

all peace process levels, although some require intimacy with the ‘international’ (Millar, 2014, p. 504). Thirdly, Dagbon’s homegrown hybrid orders strengthen Simanga’s (2018) observation that hybrid peace governance “encourages analytical approaches outside the usual top-down, statist and institution-centric approach of peacebuilding analysis” (Simanga, 2018, p. 1527).

Concerning essentialism and constructionism, they are helpful for the study in two ways. Firstly, essentialist assumptions about women and peace recur in the findings about research question one, i.e., women’s participation in the Dagbon dispute resolution process. For instance, women's articulation of their informal engagements in the dispute resolution process evokes womanhood, relationship-building, etc. Secondly, the social construction of gender provides a lens to examine the gendered cultural norms and patterns in Dagbon that decided the boundaries of men's and women’s engagement in war and peace. Specifically, patriarchy provides a lens to understand and explain male dominance in social institutions and the social structure of Dagbon. To reiterate, hybrid peace as a conceptual tool describes the dispute resolution mechanism in Dagbon. Gender essentialism and the social construction of gender explain women’s peace engagement and associated push-pull factors influencing their engagements.

## **4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, the qualitative methodology of the study is explained. The study utilises a case study design with interviews as the main instrument of data collection. In all, 17 participants were interviewed in a one-month fieldwork in three Dagbon communities. Data analysis was done manually with Microsoft Word and with the use of Atlas.ti.

### **4.1 Qualitative Case Study**

Research methodology is the medium through which researchers pursue answers to research questions. Researchers' choice of methodology is influenced by the objectives of their studies, the best possible method to research the problem (Patton, 2002), and the suitability of the methods to their studies (Crabtree & Miller, 1993, p.346). This study aims for depth and deep learning of women's participation in the Dagbon peace process hence it adopts a qualitative case study approach to engage knowledgeable persons with rich insights into the case.

Philipsen & Vernooij (2007) define qualitative research generally as "the study of the nature of phenomena" by probing their qualities, manifestations and the contexts of their occurrence (cited in Busetto et al., 2020). Strauss and Corbin (2008) assert qualitative studies are inductive and elicit the insights of the people who experience a phenomenon, including the meaning they give to it, through a focus on words and not ranges, numbers and frequencies (Punch, 2013). Creswell (2009) argues the objective of a qualitative study is to collect as much rich information as possible from knowledgeable subjects to understand a given social phenomenon. Qualitative researchers



argue to understand the depth of social phenomena requires a high degree of involvement in the natural setting during data collection (Punch, 2013; Lune and Berg, 2017). The assertions above informed the one-month fieldwork undertaken in Dagbon. The qualitative approach adopted helped to collect and sift through data for qualities, the depth of lived experiences, and prevailing social realities (O'leary, 2014) because according to Lune and Berg (2017), the 'quality' of a phenomenon, ie. the "what, how, when, where and why of a thing - its essence and ambiance" is valued (p.12). The emphasis on depth suits this study.

Consequently, a case study design was preferred (Creswell, 1998) because of the study's objectives to understand in some detail the social and cultural norms in Dagbon that produce and perpetuate patterns (Lune & Berg, 2017) for and against women's participation in dispute resolution. Case studies ascertain the relevant variables of phenomena (Homer-Dixon, 1994) to obtain rich data aimed at description (Eisenhardt, 1989 cited in Patnaik & Pandey, 2019) and in the final analysis, provide in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2007) of social phenomena. Harling (2012) argues a case study design is suitable for "a holistic inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting" in greater detail (p. 1) through a range of sources. Case studies illuminate, probe, and learn the depth of social phenomena in their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018) without attempting generalisation or cause-effect analysis (Stake, 2005).

The study utilised interviews as the data collection method. Interview data was the primary information source for writing the findings chapter. A range of secondary sources such as scholarly articles, newspapers, published books and theses were used for writing the literature review, conceptualisation background, methodology and findings chapters.

## **4.2 Area of Study and Target Population**

The study's participants were purposively drawn from the Dagbon towns of Tamale, Sagnarigu and Yendi. Tamale is the Northern Region's capital city and the site for modern political and administrative institutions. According to Macrotrends (n.d) 2023 projections, the Tamale metropolitan area has a population of about 730,000 people. Yendi is located in the Yendi Municipal Assembly. It is Dagbon's traditional capital with a population of 154, 421 according to 2021 estimates by the Ghana Statistical Service (Ghanadistricts.com, n.d). The Sagnarigu town is in the Sagnarigu Municipal Assembly with a population of 341, 711 in 2021 (City Population, n.d). Sagnarigu was not too far from Tamale and the study's research assistant had very good ties with the

community leaders. Study participants reflected the hybrid actors in the peace process and socio-cultural demography explained in Chapter 2.

FIGURE 1 Fieldwork communities



Author's construction using Google Map

In addition to purposive sampling, a snowball sampling technique was partially utilised during the fieldwork. Snowball sampling enables researchers to request participants in the initial study sample to recommend persons or groups from their networks who share similar characteristics (Crouse & Lowe, 2018). Snowballing has limitations. Firstly, data from research with snowballing techniques cannot be generalised. Secondly, snowballing holds an element of bias as study participants could influence who is referred. Lastly, confidentiality principles of social research could potentially be pierced and subjects in hiding, whether as a personal choice or community sidelining could be exposed (Crouse & Lowe, 2018). To address this, an eligibility criterion, in addition to informal conversation with referred persons, were used to check and confirm the suitability of potential participants for the study. Participants were assured of the confidentiality principle underpinning the research. The concerns about a potential breach of confidentiality, ie. exposing persons forced to 'hide' due to a troubling personal experience or stereotypes (Crouse & Lowe, 2018) do not arise as the present study never set out to elicit personal grief or misfortunes. This study investigates a 'kingdom-wide' socio-cultural phenomenon and would not generalise findings since the findings could be uniquely a 'Dagbon case'.

### 4.3 Recruitment of participants

A total of 17 participants were recruited for the study in June 2022 but the interviews were conducted between September-October 2022. Thirteen (13) separate interviews and a group interview with four (4) youth participants (two males and males) were conducted.

TABLE 2 A breakdown of the study participants

No.	Category of participants	No. of participants
1.	Male opinion leader(s)	1
2.	Female opinion leader(s)	1
3.	Religious/Spiritual leaders	2
4.	Women local political operatives	2
5.	Youth and leaders of youth groups	5
6.	The Dagbon Forum (CBO)	1
7.	The Northern Region Peace Council (State-assisted institution)	1
8.	Women-led Non-Governmental organisations	2
9.	National Commission for Civic Education (State institution)	1
10	Department of Gender, Northern Region (State institution)	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		17

### 4.4 Data Collection Instrument

Interviews were employed for the study. A social research interview is a purposeful conversation tool or a question-and-answer exchange between an interviewer, who asks clear questions and listens intently to answers from a willing interviewee(s) to gather data (McNamara, 1990). Importantly, interviews help researchers “enter into

other person's perspective"; provide a "deeper understanding of social phenomena than questionnaires in quantitative research" would allow (Patton, 2002, p.341) and explores people's experiences and views about a social phenomenon (Ngumbi & Edward, 2015, p. 291). Interview guides also provide the researcher with the "story behind a participant's experiences" (McNamara, 1990) in a flexible manner. Interviews conducted in a natural setting also post a high response rate (Mcmillan and Schumacher, 2006), give clues to verbal and non-verbal behaviours, and prompt probing to generate thorough data (McNamara, 1990).

In particular, a semi-structured interview guide was utilised. The guide had key questions with themes such as "women's peace engagement in practice" "socio-cultural restricts on women's peace engagement", "socio-cultural spaces for women and peace", "women's peace work skills" among others (Interview guide attached as Appendix 2). The guide allowed subsequent probing of a given response (Ngumbi & Edward, 2015). Semi-structured interview guides are useful where available information on a social phenomenon is limited because through probes, in-depth insights can be gathered (Gill et. al, 2008). The limited studies on women's participation in the local peace process in Dagbon are evident. Previous studies on Dagbon have theorized the conflict (Issifu, 2021), the historical trajectory and political interference of the conflict (Ahorsu, 2014; Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011; Tonah, 2012) and the homegrown hybrid approaches that resolved the conflict (Paloo & Issifu, 2021; Issifu & Bukari, 2022). Thus, a semi-structured interview guide provides flexibility to engage study participants in follow-ups and elaboration of responses on women's participation. The interview questions were open-ended, neutral, sensitive and understandable (Ngumbi and Edward, 2015) allowing participants to respond to questions in their own words (Nardi, 2006, p. 72). In addition to the interviews, field notes provided direction for areas to further probe in subsequent interviews.

#### **4.5 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involves pouring through data to draw categories, themes and discourses. Outlining a data analysis process and its suitability to a study strengthens trustworthiness in social research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data analysis is the most rigorous aspect of the qualitative research process (Thorne, 2002) since it involves 'analysing large qualitative data sets' (Nowell et al, 2017, p.1) through finding, analysing and reporting recurring patterns and themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data analysis includes content analysis, thematic analysis, and descriptive phenomenology as level of analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

In this study, inductive thematic analysis was employed to sort out the interview transcripts for description. Thematic analysis (TA) is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). TA is flexible to the ‘*theoretical and epistemological*’ camps in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 76) and makes themes in narratives obvious. As a novice researcher, TA helped to undertake a low-threshold, inductive interpretation of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The inductive analysis means the themes and patterns were directly derived from interviews (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, cited in Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six (6) stages of thematic analysis were followed. They included (i) becoming familiar with data (ii) generating initial codes, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing themes, (v) defining and naming themes, and (vi) producing the report (p.67). The thematic analysis formulations by Braun and Clarke are produced originem below, and their practical application in the study is explained there-after.

TABLE 3 Thematic Analysis process

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table extracted from Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 87).

Firstly, the interviews data were transcribed from audio to text using Microsoft Word. Fourteen (14) transcripts (97 pages excluding initial introductory conversations) were generated. The transcripts were cleaned up by strengthening sentence construction, punctuation and grammar. This process helped with data familiarization.

Secondly, the data was coded. Coding brings structure to large data for a relatively less complicated analysis process. Manual and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) were both employed as coding and analysis tools, although a large chunk of the data was analysed with the latter. The use of CAQDAS such as Nvivo and Atlas.ti features prominently in research analysis in the social sciences (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2016; Wood et al. 2016, Hwang, 2008, p. 519) for over 25 years (Paulus et. al, 2017, p. 34). However, manual coding is still quite popular for

relatively small and unsophisticated data (Ose, 2016). Manual coding also suits an inductive data analysis approach (Thomas, 2006). Paulus et. al (2017) argue that CAQDAS is met with skepticism among some social researchers fearing that software constrains methods and human agency in analysis (p. 36) but their use communicates a thorough, transparent academic process.

Initial coding and analysis were manually carried out on three transcripts between November - December 2022 to write a preliminary findings chapter for a master’s thesis seminar paper. Three transcripts were considered small to warrant the use of CAQDAS, hence the manual coding and analysis process. The other eleven transcripts were analysed using Atlas.ti between January and February 2023. The CAQDAS process added a few codes to the initial codes manually generated. Field notes also assisted in visualising and discerning some obvious themes from the data. Faherty (2010) and Zamawe (2005) assert that CAQDAS are at best data management tools in the analysis process but the human mind is the actual analysis tool (cited in Ose, 2016 p. 2).

In the manual coding and analysis, Adu’s (2020) outline using Microsoft Word was partly employed.

TABLE 4 Manual qualitative data analysis process using Microsoft Word

Stages	Description of the process
Preparing the data	Cleaning up the data by correcting sentence structure and grammar construction
Labeling research questions	Using a word or phrase from each research question to capture what it seeks to investigate (eg. Women’s participation)
Identifying features of data to code	Deciding to code particular characteristics in the data such as emotions, descriptions, facts, etc.
Coding the data	Using anchor codes (words and phrases) to highlight data that answers research questions
Assembling the codes	Collecting the codes generated into a different Microsoft Word document
Arranging codes alphabetically	Using Microsoft Word feature to sort out the codes alphabetically
Tallying the codes	Determining similar codes to tally
Clustering the codes	Combining and aligning similar codes into their distinct category
Naming the clusters as themes	Thematising the clustered codes

Author’s elaboration based on Adu (2020).

In the coding process, three code labels were developed based on the three research questions: (a) *women's participation* (Research Question 1); (b) *Dagbon participation factors* (Research Question 2), and (c) *Dagbon non-participation factors* (Research Question 3). These codes became the "anchor codes" with which the transcripts were scanned for other specific codes to be later categorised. The transcripts were then painstakingly read through to highlight significant statements and quotes that fit the anchor codes. The "new comment" feature in Microsoft Word was utilised to indicate the anchor codes and then the specific codes. In all, 127 significant statements were highlighted from the three interviews. After a tally, 54 specific codes that directly applied to the research questions were reached. Codes were tallied and merged, and this helped to search themes that inform the social, economic, religious and cultural milieu of women and peace in Dagbon. The themes were reviewed and named to conform to the research objectives and data.

In the analysis of Atlas.ti Version 22, the eleven transcripts were imported to the software. First, the word cloud feature was used to visually discern words that feature prominently in the data to get an idea of new codes to add. Except for two categories of codes, the CAQDAS codes conformed to the manual codes. The coding process added new layers of insights into emerging themes and subthemes. The new codes from Atlas.ti concerned women's use of gendered language and ATR as barriers to women's participation. The data was coded by highlighting distinctive, interesting and significant statement that addresses the anchor codes set forth. As this analysis process was inductive, ie. themes emerging from the data, Atlas.ti provided the flexibility to add and edit codes. The free quotes feature in Atlas.ti helped to highlight meaningful quotes to support the emerging themes. As a code could be aligned to many free quotes, it helped to capture nuances and streamline similar narratives. The memo feature was particularly used to write initial thoughts, and puzzles and take notes that eventually helped with writing the report.

Thirdly, when entering the searching, reviewing and naming themes stage, I matched codes to their research questions. I grouped codes that were similar and brought out related perspectives. I reviewed the themes again, re-grouping, merging and renaming where appropriate. I named the codes into themes based on the meaning they presented in the data and in relation to the research questions. For example, the codes 'early warning' and 'anti-violence messages' were themed as "prediction and diffusion of tension'. See Appendix 1 for full description.

## **4.6 Data Reliability and Validity**

Before the fieldwork in Dagbon, the interview guide was piloted on a few respondents (women) and colleagues at the University of Jyväskylä not part of the study participants. The pilot ensured clarity by removing ambiguities and inconsistencies thereby improving the understandability of the instrument as well as the capability of respondents to answer the questions (Ngumbi & Edward, 2015, p. 29). For a robust data collection process, study participants were informed about the study's objectives and its ethical principles. The researcher selected a suitable location for the interviews based on the preference of the participants. There was rapport-building between the two parties (researcher and participant) before the interviews which tend to have a positive effect on the interview process. Further, a sense of a natural than a rehearsed interview schedule as well as conscious listening, and an 'emotionally neutral body language was projected (Ngumbi & Edward, 2015). These protocols helped the study to obtain a near-accurate articulation of the views of the participants.

## **4.7 Ethical Consideration**

The ethical principles for this study were underpinned by the Finnish Board for Research Integrity (TENK 2021), namely, the Ethical Principles for Research with Human Participants. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Jyväskylä subscribes to TENK. Guest et al (2013) research ethics were also considered. In particular, ethics of informed consent, confidentiality, respect for participants and regard for tradition and culture during interviews, including the 'incentive dilemma' (customary tokens) were addressed as follows:

### **4.7.1 Informed Consent**

The researcher discussed with the participants their role in the study, including their rights to withdraw from the process without reason. Guest et al (2013) explain the informed consent obligation includes three fundamental activities: (1) providing vital information about the study to the participants, (2) ensuring participants' comprehension of the study's vital information, including study objectives, risks and study's usefulness, and (3) assuring participants of the voluntary nature of their participation - in a way that respects the dignity and autonomy of human participants in research



(TENK, 2021). The study's objectives, its contribution to the field of development studies, the researcher's positionality, and the informed consent were discussed in accessible language. Participants retained copies of signed consent forms, and consent was reiterated before each interview (Appendix 3)

#### **4.7.2 Respect for material and immaterial culture and tradition**

TENK (2021) requires respect for 'material and immaterial cultural heritage...'. Limited in the culture and tradition of the Dagbon, I read books on Dagbon and her traditions before the study. Also, the first week of the fieldwork calendar was used for familiarisation visits to communities, traditional sites and events. A respected community gatekeeper oriented me on the cultural milieu of Dagbon, and he introduced me and my mission to community authorities. Per Dagbon tradition, it is disrespectful to refuse 'kola' offered to a visitor at a chief's palace. Visitors in turn offered "voluntary but expected small cash" in return. The 'token' offered at a chief's palace does not influence the study as chiefs were not study participants. No study participants received incentives – cash or kind.

#### **4.7.3 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality and anonymity are the cornerstones of the data collection and report writing process. According to Bos (2020), confidential data in social research refers to 'any information relating to the private sphere of a person that they wish not would be shared with others' (p. 153). Bos provided pathways for researchers to safeguard confidentiality in the research process, namely, ensuring participants remain anonymous by default; not eliciting participants' private data unless necessary and in conformity with ethical reviews; providing participants with information on the researcher and persons with access to the data; obtain informed consent and respect rights of withdrawal; and provide data review opportunity to participants (p. 153).

In practice, the study identified three signposts critical for confidentiality, namely, participants' recruitment, the interview process, the data analysis and reporting. Firstly, participants received assurances that their data was protected, obtained for academic purposes, had no third-party access and the recordings would be terminated after the thesis was accepted. Secondly, the research assistant was informed about the premium the University of Jyväskylä and Finland placed on research ethics. The research assistant signed a confidentiality oath (Appendix 4) debarring him from

accessing some data and sharing same with others. Thirdly, in the thesis report writing, participants recruited for the study were not explicitly identified, except the generic terms such as “Interview 7, Opinion leaders, Tamale”.

#### **4.8 Data Management**

Whyte and Tedds (2011) defined data management as “the organisation of data, from its entry to the research cycle through to the dissemination and archiving of valuable results”. It aims to ensure reliable verification of results and permits new and innovative research built on existing information” (cited in Chigwada et al, 2017, p. 2). The University of Helsinki more specifically explained the Data Management Plan (DMP) as ‘*how data is managed during as well as after the active phase of the research project*’ (the University of Helsinki, n.d, para. 1) where data refers to insights collected by various methods, analysis of results, research sources, fieldnotes, source code and software protection. Data management is important because data is a valuable resource in and of itself due to the time and money invested in the venture. Also, data can be verified to ensure transparency and accountability in the research process, including allowing for duplication (Chigwada et al., 2017) as well as managing risks that could potentially expose study participants to harm (the University of Helsinki, n.d).

The study adopted data management principles by Mack et al. (2005). Interviews were taped with a recorder and files were transferred to a laptop with a two-level password. Copies were also stored in JYU student Google Drive. Handwritten field notes were typed into Word files, saved and stored on the JYU drive. Field notes had some coded words and abbreviations that only the researcher could discern. Study participants' identities and communities were pseudonymised to preserve their anonymity and sensitive data were not elicited during the data collection process.

#### **4.9 Researcher’s Positionality and Reflexivity**

The academic tradition’s emphasis on objectivity and 'scientific detachment is well-known. However, Crang and Cook (1995) argue researchers come to the academia with a social context already embedded in them. They explain scientific detachment serves to conceal that researchers are “equally positioned, interconnected, and involved in social and cultural relations under study” (p.7). Accordingly, they advise researchers not only to conceptualize their study subjects but also themselves with

reference to ideas in their academic area and their relationship in a social context. In subsequent paragraphs, my identity is conceptualized in relation to my personal and professional backgrounds, as well as my 'outsider status' in Dagbon.

I was born in the southern part of Ghana, precisely Accra, the capital of Ghana. I am a Christian and a male. As an educator in Ghana, I experienced the impact that gendered school experiences had on boys and girls. Also, a few days into becoming an assistant 'boy's' prefect at senior high school, I witnessed student unrest and violence on campus. My community was notorious for the thuggery of land guards who terrorised families to take over legitimately purchased lands. I was privy to unpleasant domestic violence and abuse cases during my internship at a state support unit for abused women and children. These experiences motivate my work on peacebuilding, social justice, equality and equity issues.

As fate would have it, I worked with the West Africa Centre for Peace Foundation - PeaceJam Ghana - on peace education and social change themes. I met with female Nobel Peace laureates in my line of work. Their profound yet deeply troubling challenges fuel my interest to understand the push-and-pull factors for women in peacebuilding. I understood from the literature that women's representation in peace processes is under-researched, even worse when it comes to localised peace. This is why I selected Dagbon where an all-male, homegrown peace mechanism was utilised to address the chieftaincy conflict, to simply ask, "Whither women"?

I arrived in Dagbon as an outsider-researcher, ie. new to the socio-cultural context of Dagbon because I come from the southern part of Ghana which has marked cultural differences from ethnic groups in the North. I also study in Finland and travelled from Finland to Dagbon to research a sensitive topic. It became clear to me that a male, Christian and 'foreigner' (from southern Ghana and studying in Finland) investigating the delicate chieftaincy conflict of Dagbon and mixing it with a gender lens was not taken at face value, understandably so. I explained to my hosts that I had just one identity: a researcher desirous of learning and contributing to knowledge and policy; and that I had no political motive or connection to any of the factions. Even with this explanation, some participants declined to participate in the study and no assurances could persuade them. The researcher's introductory letters from the academic supervisor and letters from the district assemblies convinced some participants to agree to be interviewed.

On the field, I stayed conscious of the researcher's identity and neutrality, values of objectivity and respect for the human and cultural realities of the communities. I negotiated and grappled with this outsider-researcher identity throughout the thesis process.

#### **4.10 Fieldwork Logistics and Language Limitation**

Despite the best efforts, the study encountered some limitations during the fieldwork regarding logistics and language. Concerning fieldwork logistics, responses to letters sent to local authorities and organisations in advance were delayed. New letters had to be sent, and the schedules re-negotiated. Also, I traveled long distances to communities only to learn about withdrawals and unilateral changes to schedule. The reliance on motorbikes to travel to far-of communities increased travel time, risks and expenses. The research could not recruit more participants nor wider community coverage due to inadequate fieldwork funds.

Regarding language limitation, I relied on my research assistant to translate interviews done in local languages. This limited further probes, and there was some difficulty translating some expressions into English because Dagbane is replete with proverbs and figurative expressions.

Overall, I sought to address these limitations by maintaining a flexible research schedule that accommodates sudden withdrawals and rescheduling requests. I also ensured that my schedules permitted me to complete all interviews in one community before moving on to the next to cope with the hikes in fuel costs and transportation fares. With the language limitation, I took notes on the context cues of participants, and the on-the-spot translation I got from my field assistant. This helped me review his translated transcripts where I requested further reviews in some cases.

#### **4.11 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the methodological considerations underpinning the study and their suitability to the research objectives. The study's use of a case study was important in pursuing answers to the research questions because it explored in-depth the Dagbon case. The combined use of the purposive and snowball sampling ensured that the 17 participants selected for the study had ardent knowledge of the case. The fidelity to research ethics for a study involving human participants proscribed by TENK, in particular, respect for the material and immaterial culture and symbols of culture helped to navigate the "kola nut dilemma" and the research upheld the culture of the people under study. The use of TA and a combined process of the manual (use of Microsoft Word) and CAQDA (Atlas.ti) to discern themes in qualitative data was especially useful for the researcher to interact with and learn from their strengths and weakness. Following the suggestion of Crang and Crooks (1997) the invitation to 'sci-

entific detachment' was refused although the objectivity of scientific studies was followed to the letter. The self-conceptualisation of an outsider researcher helped to negotiate the differences in the culture and social orientation of my life and the subjects of the study.

## 5 FINDINGS OF STUDY

This chapter presents the data analysis results concerning the study's three research questions. Firstly, how do women in Dagbon participate in hybrid peace orders in the chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs in practice? Secondly, how is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs promoted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices? Thirdly, how is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs restricted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices? Seven themes emerged from analysis for women's participation in peace orders. These include tension prediction and diffusion; peace education; demanding justice; cultural advisory to the CEC; secret channeling; community mediation; mobilisation and capacity-building. Three themes, including the women chief system; reverence for women's age and status; women's routinised activities, emerged to establish Dagbon's socio-cultural enablers for women's participation in peace orders. On the third research question about socio-cultural constraints for women's participation in peace orders in Dagbon, four themes emerged from the analysis: male dominance, Islamic beliefs and practices, beliefs and practices of African traditional religion, and gendered language.

The findings are clustered into themes and discussed separately under each research question. Firstly, themes for the first research question are discussed under "Women's participation in the Dagbon peace process". The themes for the first research question are followed by themes for the second research questions presented under "Cultural case for women and peace in Dagbon". The themes for the third research question are discussed under "Cultural constraints for women and peace in Dagbon". Finally, the chapter conclusion summarises the themes discussed.

## 5.1 Women's participation in the Dagbon peace process

Data analysis revealed that individual women, women chiefs, women in the royal courtyard, and women groups contributed informally to the peace process due to socio-cultural constraints. Dagbon women's contribution appears to follow a pattern in which many peace interventions follow intense and deliberate informal efforts by women and women groups (UN Women, 2018). The informal peace roles were focused on restoring and sustaining social cohesion, social and development reconstruction in communities, and justice in post-conflict contexts (ibid).

The subsequent discussions present themes from data analysis on women's informal roles, including prediction and diffusion, peace education, cultural advisory to the peace stakeholders, secret-channeling to peace stakeholders, mediation in communities, and mobilising and building women's capacity to answer the first research question.

### 5.1.1 Predicting and Diffusing Tension

The first way the women in Dagbon engaged in the peace process identified in the analysis was by predicting and diffusing the tension in their communities. Women's engagement helped the peace to hold for the dispute resolution process to continue. The immediate causes of the 2002 violence in Dagbon and about half a century of animosity between Abudus and Andanis left a sharp divide fueling tensions in Dagbon, especially in Yendi, the traditional capital. The Catholic Church Archdiocese of Tamale, the Yendi Parish, and third-sector actors such as the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and Women in Peace Movement (WIPIM) established peace dialogue platforms for members and supporters of the royal lineages. Women from the royal gates met to discuss and collaborate on peace initiatives to unite Abudu and Andanis at these platforms (Interviews 1,2 and 14 - Tamale). Women on these platforms moved across the gates and worked together on customary rituals and rites keen to Dagbon. The opportunity to meet and collaborate during customary rites afforded these women, hitherto rivals, the space to talk to their husbands and sons to eschew violence. Local women at the grassroots also took a strong stance against violent rhetoric in their effort to reduce the tension. A woman participant described their efforts to reduce tension as follows:

*We, women, played a role in our small way, talking to women to be patient and calm and to talk to their husbands so that we could find peaceful and lasting solutions to the conflict (Interview 8, Sagnarigu)*

The resolution of the Dagbon crisis was complex and lengthy due to the sensitivity of memories of the 'war' and politicisation. After interventions from four different Ghanaian governments, the 2002 violence was only deemed resolved in 2019 when Ya Na Abukari III was installed (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p.222). The Wuaku Commission's report was rejected by the Andani family since, in their view, it did not find and recommend the key perpetrators of the crimes for prosecution (Interview 7, Tamale). The Andani family's rejection of the report heightened the tensions in the traditional capital of Yendi and other important Dagbon communities. In addition, the CEC process stalled from 2009 until 2018, when the Abudu and Andani families 'accepted' the final peace agreement and installed the new Ya Na (Owusu-Ansah, 2022, para 16-17). In the long, complex and challenging dispute resolution process, early warning systems helped security agencies to prevent sporadic violence (Interview 14, Tamale). Women trained by the National Peace Council (Tamale) and third-sector actors in Dagbon (WANEP, WIPIM, etc.) secretly volunteered early warning signals to a 'conflict situation room' (Interviews 2 and 14, Tamale). The peace stakeholders verified, processed and shared the warning signs with the security agencies and the dispute resolution actors.

In Dagbon, signs like shortage of fowls, school pupils from Abudu and Andani families keeping a distance in school, secret midnight meetings by men, husbands sending their wives and children away to safe havens, 'prophetic declarations by "mad men roaming the streets"' (Interview 14, Tamale) call for concern because, in Dagbon's religious cosmology, they portend a looming crisis. CSOs and NGOs platforms working with women on peacebuilding collated these early warning signs, which they monitored to predict violence occurrence and escalation (interview 14, Tamale). The early warning system assisted the stakeholders of the peace in making predictions and providing intervention, as commented by a female executive of one of the leading women's NGOs which assisted in Dagbon:

*Usually, they (men) hold midnight meetings with their fellow men while they (women) are asleep on how to attack. Another sign was that the men fortified themselves with 'juju' (spiritual projection), bulletproof coats, and others. You will see them buy fowls. Those days, you couldn't get fowls to buy in town. They were all rushed to the conflict zones because they use it to fortify their juju and bulletproof coats; you know we have the local bulletproof... (Interview 14, Tamale)*

The early warning signs volunteered by women from Abudu and Andani families helped the conflict mediation process and the stability in Dagbon. According to Interview 2, beneath the tensions were political maneuverings that pitched one family against the other. Women in royal households are thus crucial in relying on early collisions between chiefs and political actors that have the potential to spark violence.



For example, a male representative of a stakeholder organisation gave an instance of how women's supply of early warning signs helped avert potential violence:

*Politics is also undermining our efforts. There was a day when a DCE met a chief and coached the chief to undertake certain things which could have undermined the peace process. The DCE is the chairman of DISEC, and he is responsible for the peace and security of the district. But based on certain calculations, the DCE knew that in the party primary (political contest to select candidates to become members of Ghana's parliament), ethnicity will heighten ethnic tension and when ethnic tension is heightened, certain groups of people will not be able to enter certain localities to access the ballot and vote so he will be leading in terms of votes. Immediately after the DCE left, the chief's wife called and coached us. Then we got the chief, returned to the DCE and security network, and turned everything. Without the chief's wife, you could have imagined. Even the satellite could not have picked it (Interview 2, Tamale)*

A less tense context in the dispute resolution process helps because it ensures frequent meetings, relationship-building and trust (Interview, 14). Women's contribution to constructing a less tense peace process curbed the violence and intransigence of the gates. Women reaching out across gates, speaking and taking a stance against violence and provocative languages, and providing early warning signs to NGOs and CSOs which were subsequently processed to the security agents were identified as ways that women engaged in the Dagbon's homegrown dispute resolution peace process.

### **5.1.2 Peace Education**

The second way women engaged in the peace process identified in the analysis was peace education. By peace education, we refer to women using the media and public spaces to talk and urge peace and trust in dispute resolution orders, especially the CEC process (Interview 9, Yendi). Women used platforms offered at public events to call for peaceful dialogue, and spoke against violent rhetoric used by Abudu and An-dani supporters. In media and public engagements, women educated the youth to eschew violence. NGOs and CSOs provided handbills in local languages, training and facilitated women's media appearances on local radio stations.

A youth leader in Tamale made this observation about the peace education role of women:

*NGOs engaged them (women) to understand the dynamics of conflicts so that they can engage their husbands and children against it... Women took advantage of the radio and TV stations to preach about peace and call on their fellow women to come together and admonish the men to drop their weapons. If not, they will act (Interview 1, Tamale)*

In addition to women's peace education role in the public and media spaces, older women from the royal families and courtyards (e.g. women chiefs, princesses, wives of chiefs) used family meetings and events to educate the youth to be peace-abiding. The Dagbon culture highly regards women who are advanced in age (Mahama, 2004, p.21) and those within the corridors of power (Interview 3, Tamale). By their age and stature, older women and women from the royal families tend to hold value and their words are respected and obeyed (interview 7, Tamale). These women also urged the factions and youth groups to restore peace to Dagbon. The role of older women and women in the royal courtyard in peace education was particularly effective because they invoked family ties and connections. They educated the youth about their relationship as Abudu and Andanis from the same ancestor. The peace education by women was described as effective in minimising tension by two interview participants:

*The roles of the chief's wives might have helped. Some of them involved the media; some went for interviews coming together to appeal for peace. (Interview 9, Yendi)*

*It reached a point where the elderly ones used to advise the young ones to hold their mouths (shut up) and not to say things that would anger men or ginger them to fight. To me, that was also a significant role though not formal. We cannot ignore it (Interview 13, Tamale).*

The use of public spaces and media for peace education allowed women to reach a wider audience with their peace message. Drawing on the family 'concept' to persuade and educate young people resonated with Dagombas, who consider family and kinship ties important to society (Mahama, 2004, p. 136).

### **5.1.3 Demanding Justice**

The third role of women in the Dagbon peace process was their demand for justice. The widows of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II, in particular, demanded justice for the Ya Na. For them, justice that involved finding and punishing the killers of the Ya-Na was the route to peace. The late Ya Na's widows conveyed to the President of Ghana in both private and public circles to bring about justice which they viewed as pertinent to the peace.

As already discussed, the hybridity of the peace process is observed in the work of the Wuaku Commission of Inquiry and the CEC, established by the Ghanaian Government. When the Wuaku Commission of Inquiry issued its report, the Andani family perceived that the Commission did not recommend key actors in the 2002 violence

for prosecution. The Andani family perceived the Government as not keen on delivering justice for the Ya Na. Subsequently, in 2010, the government of President John Fiifi Attah Mills, which had campaigned to find the killers of the Ya Na should it win the 2008 general elections, arraigned 14 persons suspected of the crimes before an Accra court (Daily Graphic, 7.8.2010). The prosecution was not successful due to lack of evidence. The news of the discharge of the accused persons by the courts angered the Andani family, who heaped pressure on the government to deliver justice for the Ya Na.

The widows of the former Ya Na issued persistent threats to demonstrate in Accra (Ghana's capital). The widows' threats to demonstrate 'naked' in Accra could have influenced the Government to expedite the peace process (Interview 7, Tamale)

*It was the question of the women insisting, particularly the wives of the late Ya Na. They insisted that the government of the day should find the killers of the Ya Na because that was the only way to bring about peace. I remember on two occasions, President Kuffour (President of Ghana during the 2002 conflict) sent a woman minister and, another time, a woman man minister to meet the wives or the widows of the late Ya Na and to give them some goods and money. They rejected the money and goods and said that they were not interested in any money or goods. What they were interested in, however, was bringing about peace in Dagbon. So that made President Kuffour try again by calling the Asantehene and the other chiefs to quicken the peace process. They did so... But it was only when he sent the envoys to the women that they chose their spokesperson, who spoke eloquently and convinced the envoys of Kuffour that there was a need to quicken the space of the peace process. And then also, from time to time, they threatened Presidents Kuffour and even Atta Mills (successor to Kuffour) that they would come to Accra to demonstrate to tell the world that their government has decided to cover up the matter ... not to bring about peace (Interview 7, Tamale)*

The widows' threats to the government must be contextualized within the culture and tradition of Dagbon, a polygynous society. Men marry between 2-5 wives (Mahama, 2004, p. 105), but Islam places a limit of not more than four wives for adherents of the religion. There is an exception for the Ya Na, who is 'gifted' wives by his sub-chiefs and other chieftains (ibid) he cannot reject. His marriage from a broad section of the Dagbon society, it is believed, strengthens family bonds and social cohesion (Interview 3, Tamale). Thus, due to the power and prestige a Ya Na enjoys, he accumulates many wives (up to about 40 during one Ya Na's reign) (Abdul-Hamid, 2010, p. 22). Per the Dagbon tradition, upon the demise of a Ya Na, his widows can only re-marry after his funeral is performed, which is usually after six months if there are no "intervening matters" (Mahama, 2004, p.102). The intervening matter for the murdered Ya Na was that the dispute resolution process dragged on for a long time, and his funeral

was only performed in 2018 (Owusu-Ansah, 2022) when the CEC issued the final peace agreement. Thus, for nearly two decades, the widows were in limbo, which could have influenced their pressure on the government. The opinion leader interviewed captured the dilemma of the widows as follows:

*You see, particularly the widows, per our culture, were not to marry until the king's funeral was performed so that other internal matters would have put pressure on them; if they also wanted to have children, for instance. I believe that some of them, because it lasted sixteen years, they didn't even have sex, so, at the end of the day, that was the end. They wouldn't have children again. They would have wished to finish the matter as quickly as possible, marry again, and have children. But the men said as long as they live, they will fight the matter (Interview7).*

The widows' pressure on the government to expedite finding the killers of the Ya Na and bringing peace to Dagbon emerged from analysis as women's informal engagement in the peace process.

#### **5.1.4 Women Chiefs' Cultural Advisory to CEC**

The fourth engagement of women in the Dagbon peace order that emerged from the analysis is the advice and testimony of women chiefs to the government and CEC respectively. Unlike other engagements of women, women chiefs' offer of cultural and historical insights into the CEC process was categorised as formal (Interview 7, Tamale). Cultural advisory refers to sharing insights into Dagbon's laws, traditions and customary practices related to the Yendi Skin. The pre-eminent women chiefs, such as Gundo Na and Kpatuya, perform sacred installation rites for new Ya Nas and funeral rites for departing Ya Nas. Thus, they thoroughly understand the succession issues related to the Yendi Skin. At separate fora, the government and the CEC invited them to provide cultural insights and advice to guide the peace process.

A leading youth group member in Dagbon recounted an instance in which he was informed about a secretive government consultation of the Patuya Na to provide a perspective to resolve the conflict.

*Women are vested with the proper history of Dagbon... there was a time when the mediators themselves got confused about certain things... The factions were saying entirely different things, so in the end, you don't know who was telling the truth. In that case, they used to confide in the women, especially the royals who were women. They find it difficult to lie, whatever truth they will tell you. There was a time... this was very informal because they didn't announce it... The cabinet (State of Ghana) came secretly to Yendi and flew Patuya Na to Accra and asked all the questions that they wanted to ask*

*and the narration that she gave was perfect. Finally, it was one of the things the government held on to in understating Dagon and knowing how to handle or take a firm stance should something like that happen... This was (partly) because of Patuya Na's narration because the lies were too much and honestly, you can't participate in conflict resolution without having a strong background or knowledge about the people (Interview 13, Tamale)*

The Dagbon society is male-dominated (Abdul-Hamid, 2017, p. 52), but it is one of Ghana's few societies with women chiefs with exclusive territories to govern (Odotei, 2006; Mahama, 2004, p.21). Women chiefs in Dagbon are said to dress like their male counterparts (Interview, 7; Mahama, 2004, p. 21-23). The highest women chief in Dagbon, the Gundo Na, is described as the female equivalent of the "Ya Na". All the male chiefs respected her and her views on issues were not challenged by the Ya Na (Interview 2). Abdul-Hamid (2017), however, describes the assertions of her apparent power to veto the decisions of the Ya Na as "theory" (p. 151). Gundo Nas reach the stool at a very old age. Hence, they possess a penetrative grasp of past and present events in the Kingdom. The next female chief below the hierarchy of Gundo Na, the Patuya Na, was also regarded as an influential woman chief. The Gundo Na at the time was invited to the CEC proceedings to offer traditional and historical insights into the chieftaincy crisis that had engulfed Dagbon for time immemorial (Interviews 2, 3, 7 - Tamale; 10- Yendi).

An interview participant expressed the contribution of the Gundo Na and Patuya Na this way:

*The Asantehene (Chair of the CEC) and the foreign people were asking them about the past incidents related to the wider Dagbon conflict. They narrated similar situations during the chieftaincy conflicts in the past (Interview 10, Yendi).*

The traditional and cultural insights the two highest women chiefs possess into Dagbon chieftaincy matters may have provided some direction based upon which the Ghanaian State acted. The chieftaincy conflict in Dagbon emanates from protracted fact-twisting and disregard for the customary process outlined for selecting a Ya Na (see Mahama, 1987). It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain facts and truths from family representatives who have parochial interests (Interview 13, Tamale). The choice comes to women chiefs who are also members of the Nabih (royal family) but are viewed as credible stakeholders for peace. In interviews, the women chiefs were said to have exhibited clarity and honesty in testimonies. For example, an opinion leader maintained the peace engagements was a men's affair, but the Gundo Na and Patuya Na were invited to testify at some level. The Gundo Na, for example, "set the records

straight (Interview 3, Tamale) against the claims of her own Abudu family, a party to the conflict.

*When they went to the Wuaku Commission, it was a men's affair. When they went to Otumfuo (CEC), it was all men's affairs. It was only getting to the end of the process when one woman from the Abudu side decided to go and give evidence in favour of the Andanis. She went to tell the CEC that what some of her people, the Abudu side, said was not the truth. She went there as a witness to the committee and gave evidence against the Abudu family while she was a member of the Abudu family. That was the only time two women appeared at the committee as witnesses of the committee. (Interview 7)*

The study's participants asserted that the insights that the Gundo Na and Patuya Na offered helped set ``the records straight`` to determine issues for mediation. They decried the limited opportunity provided to women chiefs in the peace order because their power and candour could have expedited the dispute resolution process.

To put the concerns above into perspectives, women leaders' limited participation in local peace processes reflects a broader regional problem. For example, African women are not at the forefront of peace organs in the African Union despite women's competence and qualification for peace work (Potter, 2005, p. 5). According to Potter (2005), peace mediation is critical in the ever-increasingly volatile world order. Still, only a few women are "Track One Conflict Mediators" at the level of the UN (p. 3-4). There are about just about 7% of females of UN Secretary-General's staff who work on peace processes (p. 4), thus highlighting the lack of women's representation in peace processes at the regional and international level. The constraints on women in peace initiatives are felt in local communities, but they bring clarity and context to framing peace response.

In providing cultural insights to the government and the CEC, the women chiefs in Dagbon framed the dispute resolution context, in terms of influencing the issues to be mediated at the CEC due to their insights into tradition and culture.

### **5.1.5 'Secret-channeling' to Peace Stakeholders**

A fifth role of women in the dispute resolution process was what emerged as "secret-channeling" in the analysis. Women who are members of the royal families secretly conveyed to mediators in advance the psyche, viewpoints and stance of their families' representatives at the CEC and other peace platforms. This thesis defines "secret-channeling" in the Dagbon context as insider information women give to stakeholders in the peace process ostensibly to aid their work and to determine the issues to resolve.

A determination of the psyche of parties to mediation is believed to help the peace process (Interview 2, Tamale). Abudu and Andani women involved in the NGOs and CSOs peace platforms provided helpful insider information about their family representation at the CEC proceedings. In secret communication with peace stakeholders, women offered insights about the interests and objectives of their family's representation: *their motives and positions in the family* (Interview 14, Tamale). Women's insider information was used to "categorize the representatives" into 'sympathisers', 'royals', 'conflictpreneurs', 'moderates and hardliners'. The categorization helped mediators understand the psyche of representatives, behaviour prediction and enforceability of agreements (Interview 2, Tamale). A stakeholder in the peace process expressed the importance of women's secret channeling role as follows:

*Women are also helpful when it comes to identifying key stakeholders. In the process, certain sympathizers had overstepped their boundaries and had to assume or enhance their status to become the core family members. So, an outsider will need such a woman to tell you who the sympathizers are even though he is influential; this person is a spoiler, this person has an interest in this, so if you want the core family members, this is the person, deal with him... As insiders in the families, they also help us understand the psyche of the actors, so the psyche of the actors enables us to predict behaviours (Interview 2, Tamale).*

Women's 'secret-channeling' in the Dagbon peace process warrants a few observations. Firstly, women's supply of insider information was helpful for the peace stakeholders who understood in advance the passions, influences and expectations of Abudu and Andani family representatives. The peace stakeholders had a more precise context with which to engage the parties at mediation. Secondly, it helped CSO and NGO mediation platforms to engage 'real' family members from the Abudu and Andani gates to take ownership of the peace process. In instances, male non-royal participants have enhanced their standing and undermined the peace process; thus, identifying "real family members" helped the process. Thirdly, women's 'secret-channeling' is equivalent to shooting themselves in the foot since it restricts their participation over time. Chieftaincy issues in Dagbon are delicate, with many secretive rites (Interviews 4, Tamale; 8, Sagnarigu; 13, Tamale; 14, Tamale). The secrecy of the institution evaporates when women are involved. Plans to attack and defend communities involve secret rituals to be contained in-group. Women are not trusted to keep the secrecy that chieftaincy rituals require. Their supply of secrets to peace stakeholders sustains men's quest to have them removed from the decision about chieftaincy. This observation is explored further in discussing socio-cultural factors limiting women's peace roles.

Nonetheless, the secret-challenging by women from the royal households emerged from the analysis as a way they engaged in the peace process.

### 5.1.6 Community Mediation Interventions

In their sixth engagement, women mediated local conflicts over land and chieftaincy with the potential to disturb the overall peace in Dagbon. The concentration of efforts and resources on the Yendi crisis left clashes in smaller communities unresolved, prompting women chiefs and women groups to intervene. Dagbon is a closely-knitted society (Mahama, 2004, p. 136) hence clashes in one community could ripple into other communities. For example, a land conflict in one community could have roots in the chieftaincy system, which could put Abudu-Andani families and communities on a collision course (Interview 14, Tamale). Women chiefs and NGOs mediated and negotiated local chieftaincy conflicts, land disputes and youth agitations. A former NGO official disclosed that women chiefs trained in conflict mediation by NGOs were able to mediate some of these local clashes:

*... On the land conflict issue, market women heard about the plans to attack and went to inform the female chiefs and members of the coalition. The female chiefs sent delegations to them (the planners), and they listened to them because they were powerful people. Through mediation, the land conflict was resolved. Afterward, they sent delegations with yam and other things to the female chiefs to thank them for resolving their conflict. The other one was on politics. Another was at Karaga (where they averted youth violence) (Interview 14, Tamale).*

Women chiefs' mediation in local communities affected the dispute resolution process because the Abudu-Andani disagreements also play out in remote communities. The focus on the Abudu and Andani gates often obscures potential 'spoilers' or constructive actors from the peace process (Issifu & Bukari, 2022, p.237). The Dagbon conflict stems from the selection and legitimate ritual procedures associated with Ya Na's enskinment. Still, the conflict has implications for happenings in local communities away from Yendi, the epicenter of the conflict. The mediation efforts by women chiefs helped to avert violence in local communities while the formal conflict resolution process was in motion. Hence, women's mediation efforts in local communities positively influenced the CEC process and kingdom-wide stability. The suitability of women chiefs for mediation in local communities flows from Dagbon customs. Firstly, the reverence accorded women chiefs and old age enhances their mediation roles. Also, women's multiple clan affiliations help them open avenues for dialogue between parties in conflict (Jama, 2010, p.62). In addition to reverence and kinship ties, women



chiefs exercise judicial powers in their areas of jurisdiction (Abukari, 2019, p.278), cementing their customary claim to mediation.

Generally, women's mediation initiatives are known to establish law and order in local communities where order systems are weakened due to conflicts. For example, Issifu (2015) argues that Rwandan women's post-conflict reconstruction efforts included leading local mediation courts (Gacaca courts) to restore community relationships. Before the 1994 Rwandan genocide, women had never acted as Gacaca judges, but they performed creditably in communities where they presided over the courts compared to their male counterparts (p.71). During conflicts, formal judicial systems become weak and unresponsive (Ochen, 2017, p. 20), thus relying on 'indigenous' mediation (Chereji & Wratto King, 2013, p. 3). Unsurprisingly, in many conflict settings, women become pivots around community-level governance, working to ensure justice and social harmony (Ochen, 2017, p.20).

### **5.1.7 Mobilisation and Capacity-building**

The seventh and final theme on ways women engaged in the dispute resolution process borders on third-sector actors' mobilisation and capacity-building for women in local communities. CSOs and NGOs associated with or founded by women from Dagbon (Interview 6, Tamale), such as WIPM and SWIDA-Ghana, took women through capacity-building activities. The third-sector actors organised 'trainer-of-trainers' workshops for women group leaders in local communities (Interview 14, Tamale). Women drawn from different communities, political parties, and youth groupings were mobilised for peace education campaigns, early warning monitoring, conflict mediation, and gender empowerment issues (Interview, 14, Tamale).

The interplay of peace initiatives utilised in Dagbon paved the way for chiefs, religious leaders and community leaders to allow for a holistic intervention by non-state actors to build and strengthen the capacity of local women (Interview 13, Tamale).

*We (women-led NGOs) were promoting women's participation in governance, peace-building, conflict prevention, and other development activities, gender-based violence, and legal literacy because in conflicts, people don't know their rights and don't even know that law can catch up with them (Interview 14, Tamale).*

The significance of the mobilisation and capacity-building for women in Dagbon is worth exploring. Due to male dominance, women are removed from decision-making spaces. The long-term impact of women's removal from decision spaces is that they are left with minimal capacity. For example, nearly all male participants (except actors in the third sector) intimated decisively that decisions about war and peace were a

close-ended, culturally-sanctioned exercise for men (Interviews 2, 3, 7, and 12). In addition, a female interview participant (Interview 10) protested women's participation in the high-level dispute resolution process, arguing that there was no cultural place for women in the peace process because women pierced the secrecy veil. They also used gendered language (Abukari, 2019, p.272) that inflamed the 2002 violence. Part of the reasons advanced for women's indirect participation in the dispute resolution process is the widespread view that the Gundo Na and Kpatuya Na cater for all women's representation and interest.

*The two female chiefs represented the whole women. The CEC only called Gundo Na and Kpatuya Na; they didn't call other people except the two.... They didn't call us (women). We have "mouths". Women were not called because they have "okro mouths". They talk a lot, and if they are invited, the CEC may not get whatever they want from them (Interview 10, Yendi).*

Study participants were, however, critical of the capacity of women chiefs and other women in *the male corridors of power* to engage more thoroughly with the dispute resolution process. The cultural roles and expectations shield the nabih women from far-reaching formal education and intentional capacity-building (Interviews 3 & 14, Tamale). For example, princesses were culturally expected to be well-trained to become good wives to other chiefs (Interview 3, Tamale). Also, women chiefs acted as 'spiritual protectors' of chiefs, including the Ya Na (Interview 14). Thus, the potential to grow and nurture women to engage more profoundly with peace and development in Dagbon is either missed or limited, prompting the following observations:

*When a princess is born, she is not given any good upbringing to be something in the future except to be a good wife. No specific program intentionally grooms them to become decision-makers or advisers to their brothers. They are just born princesses. But what role do the princesses play in the royal court? Zero! (Interview 3, Tamale).*

*If they (women chiefs) are to lead the process, we can achieve our aims. But for them, they think they should be there. When someone dies or threatens to kill the chief, they will be there to prevent it. They said they were powerful. So, when you ask, they say my role is to protect the chief from being attacked spiritually. (Interview 14, Tamale).*

Consequently, the third-sector filled the capacity void for women from the royal family and others through mobilisation and capacity-building activities. Women understood themes such as rights protection and legal literacy and engaged in social and economic activities that improved their lives and livelihoods. According to Jama (2010), communities where women are at the periphery of male-centered structures,

have mobilised around the third sector to play key leadership roles (Jama, 2010, p.63). The human and financial mobilisation efforts of local women and third-sector actors during conflict are important because they extend beyond the immediate quest for 'political' recognition. Women work towards cohesion, economic empowerment and sustainable peace (Jama, 2010, p. 63).

Women-focused third-sector actors used the hybrid peace space to engage, mobilise and build the capacity of local women to contribute to the dispute resolution process in Dagbon.

## **5.2 The Cultural Space for Women and Peace in Dagbon**

The analysis revealed three aspects of Dagbon's culture and tradition that promote women's engagement in peace orders. These cultural aspects were themed, including women chiefs; respect for age and status; and women's routine activities. These themes are presented in the sub-headings below:

### **5.2.1 Women Chiefs in "Male Corridors of Power "**

The customary rites women chiefs perform, and their reverence bring them into the peace orders in Dagbon. From the analysis, five customary roles and activities of women chiefs were considered to promote peace.

Firstly, the pre-eminent women chiefs, Gundo Na and the Kpatuya Na, perform customary rites at the installation of a new Ya Na. The women chiefs advise the Ya Na to "govern with moderation, a sense of fairness and justice" (Interview 7, Tamale). Women chiefs also ensure a balance of power, and their recognition in the Dagbon culture engenders peace, as expressed by a field interviewee:

*The Gundo Na is the only one who can tell Ya Na the truth. She is a very powerful princess and her position is to bring some sort of balance of power to the kingdom (Interview 3, Tamale).*

Secondly, the institution of women chiefs in Dagbon is considered a bulwark of peace because women chiefs have rarely instigated conflicts. Based on oral accounts, of all the women chiefs in the history of the Dagbon Kingdom, only two have instigated conflicts (Interview 7, Tamale). Given their peaceful disposition, the institution of women chiefs is considered a promoter of peace in Dagbon

*Our women chiefs, it was only in history that about two women asked for war; otherwise, all other women chiefs ask for peace. Only two women asked for war, which was in the case of one of her brothers...she thought that her brother should have fought and gotten the chiefship and not allowed his cousin to take it over from him. But all other women try to talk about peace and how to rule with moderation and to have a sense of mercy other than being hawks (Interview 7, Tamale)*

Thirdly, women chiefs are recognized as mediators in Dagbon. They use the respect and recognition of their office to calm down nerves and stop violence. As one interviewee recalls from her grassroots peace work, in volatile situations, women chiefs have shielded communities from attacks with their voice and stature:

*According to the women chiefs, the warriors entered Gushegu and the women chiefs were able to tame them down. They asked them to sleep and they slept. They (warriors) couldn't even shoot a fowl. They slept till daybreak until the leader of the female chief woke them up and told them to go back to where they were coming from. They could do that because they are powerful (referring to women chiefs' efforts during the Konkonba-Nanumba war, also in Northern Ghana) (Interview 14, Tamale)*

A fourth way women chiefs engage in the peace process is that the Gundo Na performed the funeral rites for the two deceased Ya Nas. The long-standing tension in Dagbon brought about a situation where the funerals of "two Ya Nas" (each from different gates who reigned at different times) had to be performed. (Interview, 2, Tamale) There were contestations around the legitimacy of performing the funeral for one of the deceased "Ya-Na". The peace role and respect that the Gundo Na and other women chiefs wield made it possible for the two funeral rites to be held:

*Regarding decision-making, if the Gundo Na talk, the others keep quiet. During the funeral process, the Gundo Na was the head of the rituals. When a man dies, we have something called the funeral room. It is the Gundo Na who is the head of the funeral room. Also, every woman's issues pass through her. Her words are final. So, although the Gundo Na was from the Abudu side during the two funerals, she was crisscrossing and took responsibility for everything, and nobody could challenge her. (Interview 2, Tamale).*

Finally, when a Ya Na appoints sub-chiefs, the appointed chiefs are expected to visit the Gundo Na or send a delegation to announce their new status to her. She takes the opportunity to advise them to strive for peace and unity. When an appointed chief

disregards or fails to call on the Gundo Na, an interview respondent revealed she could not contemplate such disrespect as the repercussions are dire:

*If the chief does not send a delegation and Gundo Na waits for some time and it is still not happening, she will ask for the widows of that man. This implies that if he doesn't come, he will die. If he had forgotten, he would now go and do what is expected of them (Interview 14, Tamale)*

The women's chief system in Dagbon demand some context. Due to patriarchy, leadership at the apex level of the traditional governance system (chieftaincy) is reserved for men (Mahama, 2004, p. 19). Dagbon is no exception to male-centredness but unique where women's leadership is concerned. In Dagbon, Nabipuyinsi (referring specifically to direct daughters of a Ya Na in this case, although the term includes granddaughters too) are selected to the pre-eminent skins of Gundo, Kpatuya and Kugulogu, and other chieftains (Mahama, 2004, p.18; Odotei, 2006; Abdul-Hamid, 2017, p. 151). According to Odotei (2006), the power and status of women in chieftaincy can be viewed with two lenses: subordination/super-ordination and dual/separate spheres of authority lenses. In the subordination/super-ordination context, men are at the apex of chieftaincy, with women in the corridors of power but with limited powers. This is the case for most parts of southern Ghana where queen mothers are present, although the spectrum of power they wield could vary. In Dagbon, the power and status of women chiefs fall within the dual/separate spheres. For example, positions (skins) of Kugulogu, Kpatuya, and Gundogu are reserved only for women (daughters of a former Ya Na). Ascension to these skins is based on promotion beginning from Kukulogu to Kpatuya and ending at Gundogu at the apex of the hierarchy (Odotei, 2006). Other skins in Dagbon alternate between women and men (grandchildren of a Ya-Na) (Mahama, 2004, p. 21). Also, there are skins (for example, Zabzugu) that are reserved for women's sons; hence sons can sit on skins by their mothers being princesses (Interview 2, Tamale). Women chiefs in Dagbon, according to Mahama (2004), are not to be construed as chiefs over only women but as chiefs over both men and women (p. xi). They have their jurisdiction of influence, sit in State, receive visitors on appointed days and are revered by their male counterparts (Interview 7, Tamale). The women chiefs dress like men and have sub-chiefs and royal advisors – mostly men (Group Interview (11), Yendi; Mahama, 2004, p. 21).

At every level, Dagbon is a male-dominated society. There are more male chiefs than female chiefs (Interview 7, Tamale). Yet, as is the unique case of Northern Ghana, women chiefs exercise considerable powers even if the corridors of power are male-centered. In Dagbon, their engagement in peace includes advocating for moderation and a sense of mercy on the side of chiefs. Their customary roles, especially in the

enskinment of a Ya Na and the funeral rites of a deceased Ya Na, demonstrate that Dagbon tradition makes a cultural case for their participation in the peace space.

### 5.2.2 Reverence for Women's status and age

In decision-making at the family and community level, some caliber of women, by their status and age in the Dagbon society, are granted access to participate. By status, Dagombas refer to customary markers such as women's membership in the royal family (princesses, women chiefs) and marriage into the royal courtyard (wives of chiefs). Princesses and wives play informal advisory roles in the royal courtyards, hence, their influence over chiefs. Regarding age, old women who have reached the age of menopause, raised children, and who live in their own homes are believed to carry wisdom and insights into life and tradition (Interview 7, Tamale). They are invited to sit in deliberations of men, and their views are respected. These women use the invitation to persuade men to embrace peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The analysis confirmed that Dagbon's male dominance lenses are blurred for women of a certain status and age (Mahama, 2004, p. 137). Concerning status, women chiefs and princesses (called Nabipuyinsi and daughters and granddaughters of Ya Nas) influenced chiefs, including the Ya Na. Princesses and women chiefs belong to the Nabih (persons of royal blood) (ibid) and are advisors to chiefs. It is said in Dagbon that "nobody accuses the Gundo Na of witchcraft; witchcraft is her property" (Interview 2, Tamale). For princesses, a study participant commented as follows:

*A chief who has sisters (princesses) and wives will occasionally seek counsel from his sisters (Interview 3, Tamale).*

Chiefs' wives participate informally in activities of the royal courtyard, although they do not belong to the Nabih. Their status as chiefs' wives brings them into the decision-making space, however, limited. The cultural case of the wife of a chief in peace orders is challenging but worth exploring. Dagbon is a polygynous society, and marriage is "regarded as an important state of a man's life" (Abdul-Hamid, 2010, p. 7). A Dagomba man typically has an average of two to five wives (Mahama, 2004, p. 105), but Islamic beliefs and practices limit adherents to not more than four wives. However, a unique cultural permissibility is granted to chiefs (especially the Ya Na) to marry more, even up to 40 wives, in the case of one Ya Na (Abdul-Hamid, 2010, p. 22). For Dagombas, marriage holds both social and religious utility. Socially, polygynous marriages strengthen bonds and cement relationships among families and communities. Religiously, marriage is the mechanism for an ancestor to be reborn; hence the spiritual cosmology would not take kindly to persons who refuse to marry (Abdul-Hamid, 2010,

p.7). As an elder explained, chiefs do not just marry many wives because they are 'Casanovas' but because they are expected to accept wives presented as tokens to them by their sub-chiefs.

*In the wisdom of our people, once a chief is enskinned at the community level or outside the community, he is given wives, so sometimes you will find a chief with 20 to 30 wives. It is not because he wants to be a casanova, but it is a mechanism deployed to ensure peace between the neighbouring villages. For how will he quarrel with a village that offered him a wife? ...The chief doesn't reject a wife offered to him. In the long run, these wives become a reference point. Women bring some kind of cohesion to society as a result of marriage. Their families use them to cement relationships (interview 3, Tamale).*

Interview participants described wives of chiefs as 'covertly' influential in the royal courtyard. They influence chiefs' decisions, only that a chief will not publicly present it as hers (Interview 3, Tamale). Wives are perceived as mother figures who understand the impact of violence on womenfolk and children, hence steering chiefs towards softening their stances. However, an interview participant countered the viewpoint insisting that it may well be that women's love for power drives them to influence their husbands (chiefs) to take positions that threaten peace.

*He (referring to the chief from one of the gates in the conflict) was the first to accept peace in Dagbon before we got peace. We have a history in Dagbon that says in a battle or war; one automatically becomes a winner where one loses. He should have been the king of Dagbon. But after he won the war, the same gate that lost the war selected the king, bringing about tension in Dagbon. He (the said chief) boldly came out to declare peace. You could have imagined what would happen if the four wives he was married to disagreed with the turn of events. Women love power... (Interview 9, Yendi).*

Despite the challenging context above, the culture and tradition in Dagbon allow for wives of chiefs to play informal advisory roles with a positive impact on peace. As one elder remarked on the influence of the chief's wife, "Elders cannot do anything if the chief's wife comes to the court to insult him; others could be beheaded for that in the past" (Interview 3, Tamale). In obvious ways, women in marriage are used to cement relationships. Wives play informal advisory roles to chiefs, usually persuading them to seek peaceful resolution of disputes.

Regarding women's age as a factor in engaging in peace, women who are old, widowed, have reached menopause, raised children and lived exemplary lives are revered in society. In some families, old women perform certain customary rites as the oldest family member in the absence of a man. In the social structure of Dagbon, men are the heads of families. When they are not present, that role is played by their eldest

son even if he is not mature (Interviews 3, 7 and 14, Tamale). However, old women are invited to join in the deliberation of men due to the wisdom and respect they wield (Mahama, 2004, p. 137). An opinion leader interviewed expressed it as follows:

*One thing with women that earn them respect is when women become old. They matter a great deal in **Dagomba** society... Men do not usually want married women to sit in their family meetings and hold discussions, but the women who have either become widows or are no longer bearing children... they are old but are still good upstairs that is in mind (mentally) are allowed to participate in many things which can also lead to the benefit of peace (Interview, 7, Tamale)*

To conclude the findings on age and status, Dagbon's culture grants some women access to the decision-making space based on their social status and age. These women persuade men to seek peaceful means of resolving conflicts. Therefore, women's age and status made a customary case for their informal participation in the dispute resolution orders.

### **5.2.3 Women's Routinised Activities and Peace**

Women's everyday activities sanctioned by tradition emerged as opening spaces for women to be involved in peacebuilding. Routine activities in the context of this study refer to everyday women roles sanctioned by tradition and culture. These roles include raising children and participating in rites of passage such as naming and funerals, festivals and cultural rites reserved for womenfolk. In women's performance of these socially-sanctioned routine roles and activities, women contribute informally to peace at home, in the community and at the State-level.

Firstly, women's grasp of the traditions and customs of Dagbon through the routine activities they perform influences peace. For instance, women become knowledgeable about family ties and relationships by participating in naming ceremonies and funerals. The Dagbon succession conflict and associated satellite clashes are driven by contests about the legitimate gate (family) to select an occupant of the skin at a particular time. It is about the rightful heir to a legitimate skin and the procedure for his installation (Paloo & Issifu, 2021; Issifu & Bukari, 2022). Thus, women's knowledge of lineages, gleaned from routinised activities, helps set the record straight about the legitimacy of persons selected to skins (Interview 3, Tamale). A study participant described how women's knowledge of family lineages helps the peace process as follows:

*"They (women) can tell the history of their family and about chieftaincy more than the men. It is only when it comes to the tom-tom beaters (drummers) that the men excel*



*because that is just their profession... Tom-tom beaters know the history of every king. As for the women, they do not beat the tom-tom, but they can talk more about family history... So they can tell if the wrong person is coming to the Skin. (Interview 7, Tamale).*

Of significance to the peace process, the rites of passage and customary rituals that women perform bring them close to having a grasp of family lineages, history, and the tradition of Dagbon. This might confirm why women provide critical insight into identifying and categorising legitimate stakeholders in the peace process (Interview 2, Tamale) and “setting the records straight” even when that record is against their family’s interests (Interview 3 and 7, Tamale). Women’s knowledge of family lineages also becomes a peace education tool to persuade “brothers and sons” not to unleash violence on each other (Interview 13, Tamale).

Domestic activities by women influence peace. Dagbon’s social hierarchy puts a man as the head of a family (Dogirikpema) who make decisions for both the immediate and extended family unit (dogim and da η, respectively) and makes family sacrifices (Mahama, 2004, p. 136). Women’s roles are confined to domestic and economic activities, including nurturing children to become ‘good sons’ (Interview 7, Tamale), attending markets to trade, cooking and agriculture (Oppong, 2013). Women’s upbringing of children as a cultural role brings them into the fold of shaping short and long-term peace in Dagbon. It is said in Dagbon that a ‘bad’ child reflects a poor upbringing by their mother since that responsibility is exclusive to women (Interview 3, Tamale). The case of children’s upbringing is true for all mothers in Dagbon, but a particular focus is invested in how princesses and wives of chiefs bring up their sons – potential chiefs. As mothers of future chiefs, tradition expects princesses and wives of chiefs to protect and nurture princes to exude peaceful qualities.

*Before a prince can be chief, his uncles must be strong and on his mother’s side because there is competition. Most of the time, the princes don’t live with their fathers because they fear anything can happen to them. However, their mother’s role is to provide a haven or sanctuary for them if their father is no more. So, they respect their mothers and uncles very well. They could go to their mothers in the night for pep talks. Their fathers can complain to them (mothers) and all responsibilities will fall on the mother to call the son to order. We believe if the child is good, it is a result of the mother’s upbringing since their pep-talks to the princes go a long way to bringing harmony and peace in the kingdom (Interview 3, Tamale).*

Grille (2014) argues parenting can potentially influence a peaceful world. Through parenting, parents train children to meet cultural expectations and conform to the acceptable behaviour of society. Grille asserts that the product of socialisation is a good

child' who is mannered and law-abiding in their society (p. 69). Canegallo, Broccoli, Cavarra, Santoddì and Fabio (2022) have explored the impact of parenting styles on children's disposition toward peace, arguing that an authoritative parenting style is likely to develop peaceful tendencies among children (p. 191). This study aims not to understand which parenting style is preferred in Dagbon and how that preference influences peaceful behaviour among children. However, Grille (2014) and Canegallo et al. (2022) highlight an important point that parenting and socialisation have a place in shaping a peaceful world. Women's role in the upbringing of children influences peace and harmony. Hence women's routine activities offer them a role in peacebuilding.

Aside from knowledge of kinship ties and the upbringing of children, women's participation in cultural activities opens avenues for them to be involved in peace. For instance, women's role in traditional festivals and funeral rites for a Ya Na gives them peacebuilding responsibilities. As an elder remarked, during the funeral of a deceased chief, the dances and rites women perform are geared toward peace:

*If you look at when a chief dies, some dances that are made during the night are all up to women. During this cultural aspect of the dance, they even sing songs that are nothing but about peace to show that there should be peace in the town. So, that is a cultural aspect dedicated to only women. Some of their songs sometimes are just like dirges which are also about matters of peace... (Interview 7, Tamale).*

Festivals are at the centre of the cultural expression of Ghanaians. Traditional festivals are celebrated in almost every Ghanaian society to celebrate political, social, cultural and religious values (Odotei, 2006, p. 18-21). Among the Dagombas, the Damba festival, which emerged during the reign of the first Muslim Ya Na Zangina, is famous. Kinney (1970) explains that the seven-day Damba celebration is associated with Islam, the predominant religion in Dagbon. Damba begins with somo-damba - the celebration of the birth of the founder of Islam, Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and ends with the chief's day (Na damba). Damba is a period of immense fanfare, drumming and dancing to demonstrate reverence to the Ya Na (p. 258). During Damba celebrations, women perform special traditional rites, using the platform to preach peace to the youth (Interview 9, Tamale).

Women's participation in customary spaces such as rites of passage, upbringing of children and customary rituals provide them an opportunity to influence peace in Dagbon.

### 5.3 Cultural Constraints for Women and Peace in Dagbon

This final part of the findings chapter answers the third research question about how women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs are restricted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices. The analysis revealed themes such as male dominance, Islamic beliefs and practices, African traditional religious practices, and gendered language as influencing the restrictions on women's participation in peace spaces. The themes, together with their discussions, are explained below:

#### 5.3.1 Male Dominance - "Women have nothing to add"

Male dominance in the Dagbon society hinders women's participation in formal peace orders. Male dominance exerts itself in three ways to restrict women's participation in peace orders. Firstly, the social structure is dominated by men at the top who are heads of families and chiefs of villages. It follows, secondly, that decision spaces are thus reserved for men. Thirdly, children learn from upbringing and socialisation that the Dagbon society is male-dominated, and decisions about chieftaincy are delicate and for men only. As one study participant puts it, *"Women have nothing to add"* to war and peace decisions (Group Interview 11, Yendi).

Firstly, women do not participate in decision-making at the family or community level and, therefore, could not have been officially involved in the formal dispute resolution process. (Interview 2, Tamale; Mahama, 2004, p. xi). As an interview participant affirmed, proceedings at the Wuaku Commission of Inquiry and the CEC were men-affair.

*... When the families went to the Wuaku Commission, it was a men's affair. When they went to the CEC, it was an all-men affair. (Interview 7)*

The "all-male" peace order in Dagbon can be examined politically. The social structure of Dagbon is hierarchical, with men as the head of each level of the hierarchy (Interview 2, Tamale). Thus, the parties to the dispute resolution process could only be male since they are at the top of the organisational hierarchies in Dagbon.

*Per Dagbon's custom, the family head is often the highest chief or oldest man, not the woman. The chieftaincy title has a hierarchy, so the one occupying the highest skin, even if that person is an adolescent is the family head (Interview 2, Tamale).*

Secondly, the role of men at the top of Dagbon's social structure is decision-making. Therefore, decision-making is reserved only for men. Women exercise some authority on domestic and childcare issues, but the ultimate decisions about the family rest with men – family heads.

*The tradition is that women can exercise limited powers about childcare and domestic issues, but that does not extend to decision-making reserved for men... It is a culture that is now inborn in the thinking of a Dagomba man. (Interview 7)*

Thirdly, women participants in the study believed that decision-making about chieftaincy was rather delicate and reserved for men.

*Chieftaincy is very delicate... Women were not involved because it was so delicate Women were not consulted, but we sort of participated because we felt it, we went through it (Interview 8)*

The experience from Dagbon aligns with Goldberg's (1993) assertion that male dominance in social institutions and structure is a pervasive norm in nearly all past and modernising societies. According to Goldberg, a society with a form of structural and organisational arrangement in which men wield power and authority over women, including dominating them in the social spheres and institutions, is patriarchal. In patriarchal societies, social institutions such as the family, economy and political institutions are filled and dominated by men (Sultana, 2012). Patriarchy is, therefore, both structural and ideological, reinforced by social institutions and socialisation. Patriarchy restricts women's advancement, development, and participation in decision spaces. In assessing the relationship between patriarchy and women's participation in peace, Gbowee (2019) posits initiatives to resolve conflicts in Africa are devoid of women's participation due to reinforced male-dominated structures and schemes at the national and local levels (p.13). In the end, peace agreements designed to address conflicts are often without provisions for women's interests, values and interests of local communities (p.14) since women are at the periphery of the power structures in society.

Their reflections on patriarchal societies above are similar to the Dagbon case. The removal of women from traditional political leadership offices, decision spaces and the use of socialisation to enforce sharp boundaries between women and men in society combine to deprive women of participation in formal dispute resolution orders.

### 5.3.2 Restrictive Role of Islamic Practices

The second way tradition and culture in Dagbon place limit on women's participation from the analysis are through Islamic beliefs and practices. The lack of women's participation in the peace order was attributed to Islamic beliefs and practices. Islam is a predominant religion in Dagbon. Hence Islamic beliefs and practices undergird many cultural and customary expressions, including gender. Islamic practices determine and enforce the construction of a man, his behaviour and his responsibilities vis-a-vis a woman. An important opinion leader contended that removing women from decisions about the Kingdom, including war and peacebuilding, is in keeping with Islamic practices' limits on women.

*I believe that the custom and history of Dagbon may be based on Islam. In Islam, women are regarded, but when it comes to discussions, they are not made participants. So, if we look at the history of Dagbon and the culture of Dagombas, it is in tandem with Islam... (Interview 7, Tamale).*

The impact of religion on social life is well-documented. Religion is a ubiquitous and enduring feature of human civilisation (Jensen, 2014, p. 1), and beliefs and thought systems influence nearly all aspects of the fabric of man. Religious values are etched into African societies' cultural and social milieu (Abdul-Hamid, 2010, p. 10). In nearly all parts of Africa, Njoh and Akiwumi (2012) note that cultures and traditions are influenced by 'Africa, Arabia and Western' beliefs and thought systems channeled through traditional African worship, Islam and Christianity, respectively (p. 2). Appleby (2000) offers a penetrative insight into the influence of religion on man and society when he comments thus:

*Indeed, literally, millions of people structure daily routines around the spiritual practices enjoined by a religious tradition, and they often do so quite 'publicly'. Dress, eating habits, gender relations, negotiations of time, space, and social calendar all unfold beneath a sacred canopy. Around much of the world, politics and civil society are suffused with religion (Appleby, 2000, p.3, cited in Abdul-Hamid, 2017, p. 7).*

Firstly, Islamic beliefs and practices influence the construction of gender in Dagbon. The (mis) interpretation of Qur'an verses such as "man is not like the female" (Abdul-Hamid, 2017 p. 54) perpetuates gender injustice. For instance, women's removal from discussions about political and social issues was reinforced by an Islamic cleric interviewed. He indicated that women were barred from appearing, holding discussions and testifying in male-dominated settings because women must not be seen and heard

in a group of men. It follows that women could not be involved in high-level discussions about chieftaincy per Islamic practices:

*Women's limited involvement is in line with that of Islam. Islam permeates Dagbon. Dagbon does not allow women to appear before the crowd in such situations. The same is Islam which does not allow women to testify in male-dominated settings. We say " a woman does not cut the head of a snake". Even when it demands witnessing, two women appear. In that case, two would equal one male. Should there be a need for a woman to appear there, there would be a shield between them and the crowd (Interview 12, Sagnarigu).*

Analysis revealed that explanations for women's removal from formal peace spaces bothered on their biological features. Women's voices and physical features were said to possess a powerful force capable of pleasure lure. The objection to women's participation in decision spaces is linked to the voice of the woman possessing some "libidinal" prowess (Abdul-Hamid, 2017, p. 95-96) hence the voice-veil. Women's subjugation on the grounds of biological features appears to have been woven into the social and religious cosmology of Dagbon, preventing them from participating in decision spaces. In Islam, a woman's voice is considered part of her 'awrah' (visible body features - in Arabic), which should remain invisible (Abdul-Hamid, 2017, p. 53). In a field encounter, the story was told about Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and his wife, Aisha. The narrator who is an Islamic cleric said Aisha did not return from a journey with Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and per the practices of her time, she could not witness in a group of men:

*... They traced Aisha. She told them she came out to free herself (her handlers did not see her leave the veiled horse-drawn carriage and so returned without her). When she was brought home, "Sayid Ali" proposed that be whipped. Satan intruded here because Aisha could not mix with the men to argue. Since Islam does not allow women to mingle with men, it spread among people in the community, "Oh, did you hear the Prophet 's wife engaged in prostitution and they caught her?" Others said she could not do such a thing. It spread until it reached the Prophet (PBUH) and Aisha ran to her father's house. A revelation (verse from the Qur'an) came down from God and supported her. Angel Gabriel clearly stated to the Prophet that it was false against her. The verse came because she could not raise her voice amid men (Interview 12, Sagnarigu).*

Among women fieldwork participants, a counter proposition was that Islam (primarily based on the holy text, Qur'an) per se was not the cause of gender injustice. It was Muslim practices and misinterpretation of religious texts that spurned gender injustice. The following comment from the field participant highlights the distinction:

*... We have Islam, the Qur'an, and the practice, which are all different things. In present times they are saying women should be silent, but Aisha was never quiet... So, tradition has intertwined with religion and we are confusing both... Islam tells you that as a woman, preserve yourself. Do this and that to meet your creator, not even human beings... So, it is the culture that plays a major role that we should be silent but not Islam (Interview 9, Yendi).*

Hassan (1996) proposes a distinction between “*Qur’anic ideals versus Muslim practices*” to capture the subjugation of Muslim women. Hassan’s view is that a true and proper interpretation of the Qur’an demonstrates that the Qur’an upholds equality of all sexes and takes further steps to provide special social rights for women due to their vulnerability arising from their historic mistreatment. In her view, the historical biases of other religions – Judaism, Christianity, etc. – could have influenced the Arab-Muslim culture in the soil that Islam sprouted to deprive women of the original equality intent of the Qur’an (p.380-381). Hassan (1997) also discusses the (mis)interpretation of the Qur’an as central to the subjugation of women in Islam. Relying on the descriptions of isogesis to discuss how meanings have been read into the Qur’an (rather than from the Qur’an – exegesis) to hold women down and project the patriarchal values religious practices sprout from (cited in Abdul-Hamid, 2017, p. 61). Interpretation of Islamic texts with patriarchal lenses is under contestation by scholars who write under the banner of Islamic feminism. Riffat Hassan, Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud's interpretative study of Islamic religious texts attempt to lay bare the patriarchal notions read into the interpretations. On human rights, for example, Hassan provides a compelling theocentric viewpoint about the ‘original’ centrality of the Qur’an as a promoter of equal treatment of all sexes (p. 371-380), including rights to life, freedom, work, education, from abuse, etc. On her part, Asma Barlas believes in the divinity and sanctity of the Qur’an as God-inspired. Still, she raises the question of men’s biased interpretation of it to suit their patriarchal notions and practices. The two views sustain Amina Wadud's observation that the interpretation of the Qur’an is never objective – but subjective. The subjective interpretation of an objective religious text as the Qur’an gives patriarchal values a boost to the detriment of social equality and progress for women (Ammah, 2018, p. 62-63).

The central findings in this section are that Islam is not just the major religion of the Dagomba people. Islamic beliefs and practices influence the political, social, sacred, and secular spaces of the Dagbon State and individuals’ minds. The clerics of the religion are highly regarded (Imam, 2015, p.32) and their interpretation of religious texts hold significant sway. Thus, with traditional practices that already have biases coalescing around Islam, and Islam’s hermeneutics based on ‘maleness’ (Abdul-Hamid, 2017, p. 258), women in Dagbon are deprived of a voice and presence to contribute to

peacebuilding - because their 'awrah' should be out of sight in male-dominated settings (Interview 12, Sagnarigu).

### 5.3.3 Restrictive Role of Traditional African Religion

Traditional belief systems and practices also restrict women's participation in peace orders based on the analysis. For example, African traditional religion holds significance for about 10% of the Dagbon population (Abdul-Hamid, 2010, p. 3). Beliefs and practices of ancestral worship also construe women's bodily features to bode bad omens for decision-making, including conflict and peace issues. According to a field participant, women's sight and physical presence during rituals ruin spiritual fortifications associated with conflicts and peace, hence their restrictions in those spaces.

*If they (men) are fortifying their bulletproof wear, a woman can spoil them. So, they don't allow women to be with them when doing those things (Interview 14, Tamale).*

In addition to women's sight and presence ruining spiritual fortification, menstrual myths and taboos constrain women's participation in conflict resolution spaces. Menstrual mis(conceptions) are a barrier to women's inclusion in decision spaces because menstrual myths are prevalent in both traditional worship and Islam. Abdul-Hamid (2017) explains menses is perceived to "defile the sanctity of mosques"; hence women in pre-menopausal stages are discouraged from praying in the mosque, fasting, and touching religious texts during their menstrual period (p.107). During a family meeting, only older women who have reached menopause are permitted to participate. Menstruating women are barred from family ancestral sacrifices because menses is deemed unclean. Chieftaincy rituals in Dagbon are steeped in both Islamic and ancestral cosmology. For example, although an Islam-dominated State, a Ya Na is selected through soothsaying and consultation with the spirits of former Ya Nas (Mahama, 2004). It is, therefore, the view of field participants that menstrual beliefs deprive women rights of participation in formal peace spaces.

*Some result from our menstrual cycle and some peace practices do not allow us to participate. For example, a typical Dagomba man would say you're dirty and he will not allow you into some traditional activities (Interview 11 - Group, Yendi).*

Menstrual myths and misconceptions are prevalent in Ghana. For example, in a study conducted among school-attending adolescents in Kumbungu, Northern Region (a Dagomba and Islam-dominated area) to understand the cultural barriers to menstrual



hygiene, Mohammed and Larsen-Reindorf (2020) reported that about 85.7% of respondents identified restriction of girls from religious activities due to uncleanness and impurity (p. 12). Also, male participants in Mohammed and Larsen-Reindorf's study disclosed that menstruating girls were not allowed to 'prepare some local dishes (e.g., *wasawasa*)', read the Holy Quran, pray in the mosque, or attend some ceremonies (p. 12).

Traditional beliefs and practices in Dagbon limit women's participation in sacred and secular spaces based on their biological features and phases (sight and menstruation), restricting their participation in formal peace orders.

#### **5.3.4 Restrictive Role of Gendered Language - "Women's Mouths"**

Finally, the analysis revealed that gendered language restricts women's participation in formal peace orders. Language is a medium for transmitting culture (Sibani, 2018, p. 60), including gender roles and expectations. In Dagbon, women's use of graphic gendered language, which reduced men to women, shamed them as cowards and questioned their "manness," were considered factors that fueled the Dagbon crisis. During the conflicts in 2002, women were reported to use indirect and coded language to criticize and wet up men to fight; thus influence the protest to include women in peace spaces.

*We also heard from mobile platforms where women suggested that "if God has blessed them with manhood, it would have been better than giving it to their husband. They (women) would have fought". So most of them do not fight for peace. They also spoke ill of Chiefs and their peace-loving husbands during those periods (Interview 12, Sagnarigu).*

Dagbon culture outlines expectation for men. A 'Dagomba man' is expected to act with bravery and valiance to protect his family and community. It is the basic expectation of every Dagomba man and women take the opportunity to remind men about these obligations. Consequently, peace-loving men were driven by gendered expectations, laced with insults and derogatory words conveyed by women. This forced some men to join the 2002 violence and after. Female field participants suggested that men were forced to respond harshly to situations lest they be accused of being weaklings, lowering their standing in society.

*Most of the conflict begins with women and their mouths... If a man is going to tolerate something, the presence of a woman can make him not to... A woman standing there who is also from your side can say something which will make it look like you are so weak.*

*As soon as the woman says something like that, it can energise you... making you forget all the tolerance and patience you would have demonstrated (Interview 13, Tamale).*

Some women also used insults and coded and indirect language to target gates (families) that could not conform to cultural norms and expectations due to extenuating circumstances. For example, Islamic practices require the burial of a deceased within 24 hours of death. However, due to the impact of the conflict on tradition, funerals for chiefs and elders who died during the conflict could not be held within the stipulated timeframe. Some women were said to use indirect language to target families who could not conform to burial expectations. As commented by an interviewee, indirect and coded language has the potential to exacerbate the conflict as the other side may be forced to respond:

*Women secretly passed harsh comments. They were adding more fire. It will be hard to say women during that time were responsible for the peace. When a Dagbomba woman insults you, it feels like a bullet... even though there is peace today, within women there is still no peace. Among the men there is peace (Interview 9, Yendi).*

Abukari (2019) contends that women's use of gendered language could have prolonged the conflict (p. 272). He explained gendered language to mean “*cultural connotation of language used by both sexes which has the possibility of sparking violence in Dagbon*” (*ibid*, p. 272) Dagbon social norms and customs emphasize gender roles, and this is reflected in the language used by men and women. Women are required by culture to show deference and obedience to men. On the other hand, men are expected to assert their authority and defend their honour (Mahama, 2004). These cultural expectations of men and women are contained in language expressions to motivate men and women to live up to social expectations. Alhassan (2014) reveals the Dagbani language has masculine and feminine language expressions that make gender categorisation natural for Dagombas. The language can be used to discriminate based on sex. For instance, in Dagbani, *doo* (man) is not just a descriptive of a biological man but connotes qualities of courage, strength, etc., believed to be shared by only men. Consequently, a man could be described as *paya(woman)*, not because his biological features look like a female, but because he fails to exhibit ‘manness’ (Abukari, 2019, p. 279).

However, restrictions played on women’s participation in peace orders based on “their mouths” is only a symptom of wider structural inconsistencies in Dagbon. Firstly, the conflict has its foundations in the disagreement over which gate (family) is legitimately placed on selecting a Ya Na at one point or the other. Secondly, the clashes are also about which selection procedure and applicable rituals are legitimate in the search for a Ya Na. Over time, political parties have exploited the tensions in

Dagbon, making it protracted (see Mahama, 1987). Further, Dagbon is a structurally patriarchal society, and women do not make decisions about conflicts. Succession conflicts in traditional governance systems arise from factors specific to a period, and power transfers are likely to result in instability in communities (Tseer & Mohammed, 2022, p.2). Therefore, women's 'mouth' cannot be the only factor for all the historical trajectories of succession conflicts in Dagbon. Finally, narratives about women's use of indirect and coded language only further alienate them from decision spaces. Ideally, if not for structural male dominance that restricts women's participation in decisions about peace, perhaps "women's mouths" provided an excellent opportunity to invite them to the peace table where they can be 'reformed'. This view ties in with the following observation:

*I think that should have been one of the reasons to have involved women in conflict resolution. They don't fight but fuel it most of the time, triggering conflicts (Interview 13, Tamale).*

In conclusion, "women's mouth", that is, their use of indirect, coded and insulting languages, pushed men to fight, raising tensions in Dagbon. Women could, therefore, not be expected to be part of a peace space resolving a conflict they exacerbated with the "mouths".

#### **5.4 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter answered the study's three research questions based on the analysis. For the first research question, women engaged in seven informal activities to complement the all-male dispute resolution process. Firstly, women offered early warning signs to third-sector platforms to process to the security agencies to predict and stymie violence. Secondly, women undertook peace education activities in the media to preach tolerance and peaceful resolution of differences. Thirdly, threats by the widows of the murdered Ya Na's widows to stage a naked demonstration in Accra at the government's failure to ensure justice and peace in Dagbon influenced the government to accelerate the peace process. Fourthly, women chiefs officially provided customary advisory to the CEC process. Their testimony was judged to have "set the records straight" and determined issues to mediate at the CEC. Princesses and women from the Abudu and Andani families secret-channeled the positions of their families' representatives to the third-sector stakeholders, which helped with categorization and behaviour prediction at the CEC. Additionally, women chiefs worked with CSOs to

resolve community conflicts. Finally, third-sector actors mobilised women and organised capacity-building programs in local communities to facilitate their peace engagements. Concerning cultural enablers for women's engagement in the dispute resolution process, three factors, i.e., the women chiefs system, reverence for older women in families and influence of princesses and wives of chiefs at the royal courtyard; women's performance of customary rites, rites of passages and upbringing of children provide them with limited spaces to engage in dispute resolution. Lastly, four structural and cultural dynamics restricted women's participation in dispute resolution. Men dominate Dagbon's political and social hierarchies; hence only men could represent families in the dispute resolution process. Religiously, Islamic beliefs and practices, particularly the construction of women's body and voice as "awrah", i.e., part of the visible anatomy of women that must be shielded from the sacred and spiritual spaces, restricts women's participation in the peace spaces. Similar is the case for traditional religion, which construe women's sight, presence and menstrual cycle as powerful sources to ruin fortification and rituals in sacred and secular peace spaces. Finally, women's use of gendered language was blamed for the 2002 crisis; hence men's position was that women could not participate in the peace process.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This study sought answers to three questions. Firstly, how do women in Dagbon participate in hybrid peace orders in the chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs in practice? Secondly, how is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs promoted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices? Thirdly, how is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs restricted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices? Taken together, women's engagement in peace orders within the cultural context of Dagbon is examined in this study.

With the first research question, the analysis showed women engaged in seven activities to support the hybrid dispute resolution mechanisms in Dagbon. Firstly, women predicted and diffused the tension by supplying early warning signs to CSO and NGO platforms they were involved with. The third-sector actors verified, processed and shared early warning signs with State security agencies to de-escalate the tension and avert potential violence. Abudu and Andani women on third-sector dialogue platforms reached out to one another to persuade their husbands and sons to commit to a peaceful resolution of the dispute. Secondly, women engaged in peace education in the media and public spaces, drawing on kinship ties, a highly regarded feature in Dagbon, to persuade 'brothers' to settle their disagreements amicably. Thirdly, the analysis identified the Ya-Na's widows' threats to demonstrate in Accra, amidst nakedness, to demand justice and peace. The analysis identified the threats pressured the government to quicken the peace process. Women's "show of nakedness", or threats of it, is a culturally unacceptable spectre in Ghana yet a powerfully symbolic last-resort act women employ to press home demands in patriarchal and religious societies.

Fourthly, women chiefs, such as the Gundo Na and Kpatuya Na, engaged to advise the Government and CEC on customary procedures to resolve the conflict. The data revealed that women chiefs set the records about succession straight from the lies

of the men representing their families at the mediation. The fifth way women engaged was through backchanneling, where influential women from the gates provided insights into the psyche and the influences wielded by family representatives during the mediation processes. Then, penultimately, women-led NGOs, CSOs and CBOs mobilised local women and built their capacity in conflict mediation, prevention and livelihood skills. Finally, women meditated on some local conflicts, often working with third-sector actors to address land and succession conflicts in local communities far from Yendi, the epicentre of the peace process.

The second research question delved into the socio-cultural soil of Dagbon to unearth how customary practices supported women's engagement in peace orders. Analysis revealed that Dagbon's women's chieftaincy system, the reverence for the age and status of some women, and women's performance of socially-assigned roles generated informal avenues to engage in peace. Firstly, the pre-eminent women chiefs, Gundo Na and Kpatuya Na, engage in peace by virtue of their office. They perform customary rituals during the installation and funeral of a Ya Na. In installation rituals, women chiefs advise the Ya Na to reign with moderation. In theory, the Gundo Na balances the Ya Na's powers (Abdul Hamid, 2017) and her knowledge of tradition, history and family relations bring her into succession and peace decisions. Other community women chiefs are revered and called to mediate communal disputes. Secondly, women in the royal courtyard, such as princesses and wives of chiefs, act as advisors to chiefs. These women persuade chiefs and princes to settle differences amicably. Similarly, old widowed women who have reached menopause and live in their personally-owned quarters are the only women invited to join men's deliberations. Due to the respect they wield, their pleas for peace are accepted based on the analysis. Lastly, socially-sanctioned, everyday activities such as child upbringing and participation in cultural rites and passages give women superior knowledge of family and kinship ties. The activities and knowledge create customary conditions that informally put women in the decision-making spaces of peace. For instance, women's exclusive responsibilities in raising their children mean they train their sons to be peaceful. Especially for women in the royal family, expectations are that they teach their sons (future chiefs) to be peaceful and seek peaceful means of resolving conflicts.

The third research question extends the second by probing the restriction Dagbon's culture and tradition place on women's engagement in hybrid peace orders. Analysis revealed four aspects of Dagbon's culture and tradition – male dominance, Islamic beliefs, beliefs associated with African traditional religion, and gendered language – that restricted women's peace engagements. Firstly, Dagbon's large-looming, hierarchical male dominance was identified in the analysis to remove women from decision-making spaces. In Dagbon, men are the heads of families and villages. Therefore, the representation of Abudu and Andani families in the dispute resolution spaces

could only be male since they occupy the political systems and hierarchies. So thorough is the grip of male dominance in Dagbon that in the absence of fathers, the eldest male child, regardless of his age, not his mother, exercises the decision-making powers. Secondly, Islamic beliefs and practices were identified as a source of gender injustice. Women were barred from sacred and secular spaces because their “awrah” (body, construed together with their voices) possessed “libidinal” attraction, which should be shielded from the view of men and the public. Women's participation was barred since the peace orders were undertaken in secular and spiritual spaces. Thirdly, ATR beliefs and practices in Dagbon also construe women’s eyes and menstrual cycle as having the potential to ruin spiritual fortifications associated with chieftaincy, thus creating distance between women and peace spaces. Finally, the study’s analysis established that women’s use of gendered expressions was believed to have contributed to the conflict's protracted nature, resulting in protests against women’s inclusion in formal peace orders.

A few issues emerge from the study that require some reflection. Firstly, the CEC and third sectors' engagement in the hybrid peace orders registered in the minds of the people interviewed. They expressed there was peace in Dagbon because of the CEC and the activities of CSO, NGOs and CBOs – third-sector actors. They made minimal attribution to the role of the modern Ghanaian State, except for its security role. Participants' near distance from the State’s securitised liberal role could indicate that people in Dagbon are more inclined to customary efforts by chiefs and liberal values of third-sector actors to resolve local conflicts. A raft of possible explanations might sustain the high recognition accorded the CEC and third-sector actors. Firstly, the chieftaincy institution is popular and revered and the emphasis on African cultural diplomacy resonates with Ghanaians who adore the chieftaincy institution. The three chiefs of the CEC are respected overlords of major ethnic groups in Ghana with a historical connection to pre-colonial Dagbon. Secondly, the conflict stems from culture and tradition, so its resolution, many argue, should be culturally placed. The CEC’s work was situated within the cultural and traditional boundaries of chiefs’ selection in Dagbon. Thirdly, the State’s liberal activities were inclined towards judicial facts and securitisation. For instance, the Wuaku Commission of Inquiry gathered facts about the causes and actors of the March 2002 violence. Also, the peacekeeping operations by the police and military established security and stability in which the peace orders were to flourish. In liberal peace orders, the search for facts results in a zero-sum outcome with either “winner or losers” (Issifu & Degraft, 2019), pitting one party against another. Fourthly, there was little trust that government institutions could be neutral in the peace process because of the widespread perception that the government at the time of the 2002 violence sided with Abudus, its ardent political supporters in Dagbon (Tonah, 2012; Ahorsu, 2014; MacGaffey, 2006). For instance, the Wuaku

Commission of Inquiry made finding on national security lapses that resulted in the conflict. Government officials from the Abudu family superintended some of the national security infrastructure, fueling suspicions. Furthermore, the Dagbon conflict has protracted because of the intervention of governments and patterned politicisation that pitches the two royal gates between divergent political traditions in Ghana (Ahorsu and Gebe, 2011).

Conversely, the CEC's perceived neutrality, search for truth, relationship-building, and a win-win outcome, using the traditional institutions and customary procedure of Dagbon, was popular. Third-sector actors were supportive, neutral actors in communities far off the powerhouse of Dagbon. These reasons might explain why the activities of the CEC and third-sector actors remained popular among the peace orders. Notwithstanding these observations, it was the cumulative effect of all stakeholders in this homegrown collaboration (liberal and local) that 'successfully' resolved the protracted non-state conflict. The CEC and third-sector actors alone could not have contributed to the peace outcome without the security and stability in Dagbon provided by 'liberal' state institutions (Issifu and Bukari, 2022), a variable MacGinty underscores.

Furthermore, women's conceptualisation of their 'participation' in the hybrid peace orders invites some reflections. The study's initial framing of women's engagement in the peace orders as 'participation' was jettisoned because the analysis does not sustain it. Conceptually, women in Dagbon articulated that their roles were informal, contributory and complementary to the all-male hybrid peace orders. As the hybrid dispute resolution mechanisms were male-centered, women's engagement was informal based on the analysis. There is a distinction that exists between formal participation and informal peace engagements. The former could refer to recognised persons with defined roles in the peace orders, while the latter could refer to activities that support the peace process. Both formal and informal participation in a peace process contributes to its outcome. The UN Women (2018) assert that about half of all peace processes have begun based on the informal initiatives of women groups in post-conflict reconstruction, mediation and social development. The informal engagement of women in Dagbon registers as applicable when judged against the background that during conflicts, systems of law and order in local societies become weak. Women's traditional governance systems have filled the void (Ochen, 2017), where formal processes are unresponsive and ineffective.

Of interest to feminist scholarship critical of women's exclusion in local peace is that context matters. As George (2018) argues, there are context-specific nuances and differences in women's engagement in local-liberal (hybrid) peace orders. For instance, while Dagbon is an ardently male-dominated society, hence patriarchal, its cultural soil permits some women in the "male corridors of power," such as the Gundo Na



and Kpatuya Na, to wield and exercise levers of decision powers. However, ordinary local women have little or no space in peace endeavours. The caveat is that decision-making roles for the womenfolk are reserved for a few women who fit a particular (advanced) age and status criteria. For example, women chiefs in Dagbon exercise independent authority in what Odotei (2006) describes as ``male corridors of power``. The pre-eminent women chiefs belong to the royal family and are revered by male chiefs, including the Ya Na. The Gundo Na, for instance, can veto Ya Na's decisions, in theory (Abdul-Hamid). So, while Dagbon is a male-dominated society, the presence of women of certain ages and statuses, such as chiefs, princesses, chiefs' wives and older women, suggests that the cultural soil has traces of nutrients to support (some) women's engagement in the peace space, albeit informally.

Additionally, the role of the third-sector in resolving the Dagbon crisis invites reflections. The informal spaces women entered in the peace orders would have been almost impossible without the initiatives of third-sector actors. The activities of third-sector actors in the Dagbon peace order were multifaceted and reflected liberal-local values (Issifu & Bukari, 2022). For example, the UNDP office in Ghana, a liberal actor, facilitated the work of the CEC, a customary local actor. At some levels, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), a CSO, was involved in peace dialogue efforts between the Abudu and Andani families. The Women in Peace Movement, an NGO, engaged in women's mobilisation and capacity-building for them to contribute meaningfully to the peace process. Concerning women's mobilisation and capacity-building by third-sector actors, the long-term impact of women's limited participation in decision-making could have left women with minimal capacity in community mobilisation, conflict resolution skills, general development work, etc. While women chiefs retain some decision powers, they reach their skins at an advanced age and may not be active enough to undertake the gruelling tasks of making peace in a long-standing succession crisis. Since the power and prestige of women chiefs were not transferable to other women, third-sector actors in the Dagbon peace orders strengthened peacemaking capacities for local women. Women-led third-sector actors trained local women, women chiefs, and princesses in social organisation, community continuity and post-conflict reconstruction themes. Although systemic barriers still exist, third-sector actors are a viable vehicle for mobilising and building the capacity of local women in peace processes (Verkoren & van Leeuwen, 2013).

Conceptually, the study demonstrates that hybridity could be utilised as an analytical tool (Pettersen, 2012) to investigate homegrown liberal-local peace strategies for non-state conflicts. The Dagbon peace process is a moderate homegrown hybridity because it is driven by multiple actors navigating strands of in-country liberal-local values to address a communal conflict. For example, the State's Wuaku Commission of Inquiry role is a formal judicial process external to Dagbon customs. Formal judicial

processes are Western peace mechanisms. In addition, the security agencies of the State, also external to Dagbon customs and processes, established stability. With security established, the CEC as a customary/local actor, mediated the conflict relying on customary practices central to Dagbon. INGOs, NGOs, CSOs and CBOs who straddle the local and liberal values contributed to the peace process, negotiating the informal inclusion of women while respecting the cultural processes of Dagbon. The conceptualisation of the Dagbon peace order as homegrown hybridity meets MacGinty's hybrid peace features, which should involve multiple actors, the use of internal and external resources, an aim to stop the violence, and non-linear fluid exchanges of the liberal and local.

Notably, some feminists' scholarship argues that the peace space promotes the behaviour of men (Mcleod, 2015), the exclusion of women due to power imbalances (Belloni, 2012; Ryan & Helen, 2017) and gender stereotypes (Capriolo, 2000). Simply put, they argue, often from a Eurocentric position, that with power relations favouring men prevalent in many traditional and modernising societies, local women are less likely to participate formally in hybrid peace spaces. Women's informal engagements in the hybrid peace orders in Dagbon partially confirm the scepticism when social construction of gender tools is utilised to understand men's and women's participation in the homegrown hybrid peace space. Conversely, essentialist notions drive women's engagement in local peace orders. For example, in Dagbon, motherhood attributes associated with raising a 'son', women's pleas to family members, marriage ties holding social relations, and persuasive skills in public education were invoked and explained as women's capabilities in the peace space.

## **6.1 Implications for further research and policy**

This case study expands the international gaze on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda because it reports women's engagement in a homegrown hybrid dispute resolution mechanism for a non-state conflict in Ghana. It breaks the usual conceptual autarchy that views women as a 'homogenous' group with the same problem for gender analysis. I present a nuanced local reality of women in peace spaces in Dagbon, where tradition and culture influence women's engagement in hybrid peace orders. I submit that while patriarchy restricts women's formal peace engagements, the women chiefs in Dagbon engage in peace spaces based on the power and influences they wield in their communities. Therefore, I make a case for context-specific gender analysis of women's engagements in localised peace processes.

At the level of theory, the study adds a gender dimension to hybrid peace governance with a focus on homegrown liberal-local interactions. However, further research into gender and peace hybridity has to critically examine the origin and power dynamics at the creation stage of hybrid peace orders, and their influence on women's participation. For instance, will a top-down construction of a hybrid order likely perpetuate exclusion, especially of women? Will a bottom-up process include or eliminate social categories, including women? Often, the conceptualisation of peace hybridity focuses on finished products, with missing links in the origin and power dynamics that shape the hybrid order in practice. It is safe to hypothesise that the agency of local or state stakeholders in shaping a homegrown hybrid order could affect who is included or excluded in the hybrid order in practice. For gender scholarship, pondering the creation of hybrid orders, whether it is imposed by an external host (the modern state) or as a product of local agency, would be a theoretically enriching endeavour. Understanding how hybrid orders come into being and how their creation affects local women's engagements will expand the hybrid governance field. I am calling for more studies on how emancipatory and gender-focused hybrid orders can be created and contested. Also, I hope that a well-funded and innovative student of critical peace scholarship will stay in Dagbon for a considerable amount of time to observe and participate in women's engagement in local peace practices, and how their peace roles could be amplified and strengthened.

The study's implication for practice in Ghana is that homegrown hybrid orders can be adopted to address other chieftaincy conflicts, especially in Northern Ghana. However, the local realities and social structure undergirding the intended usage areas should be considered, and women's participation stressed. Further, I recommend state agencies such as the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection, National Peace Council and third-sector actors dedicate resources for advocacy, legislation and capacity-building to mainstream gender in local peace processes. Strengthening the capacity of customarily-placed women and ordinary women in male-dominated settings will generate a cadre of local women with the requisite skills and influence to participate in formal peace spaces. Finally, I recommend support for creating a women's wing of the traditional authority in Dagbon where women chiefs can deliberate and make customary-placed changes for gender-sensitive peace orders.

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APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1: ELABORATION OF CODES AND THEMATIZATION PROCESS**

Research Questions	Anchor codes	Specific codes generated (tallied)	Naming themes
How do women in Dagbon participate in hybrid peace orders in the chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs in practice?	Women's participation	Early warning, reaching out, anti-violence messages,	prediction and diffusion of tension
		peace education, sensitization	Peace education
		Widow's demands	Women's demand for justice
		CEC witnesses, advisory, consultations, cultural roles	Cultural Advisory to the CEC
		Mediation, negotiation	Community mediation
		mobilisation, capacity-building activities	mobilisation and capacity-building
		Insider information	Secretchanneling to peace stakeholders

How is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs promoted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices?	Pro-participation factors	Women chieftain	Women chiefs
		Old women; chiefs' wives; princesses influence	Reverence for old age and status
		Child upbringing, cultural dances, family lines knowledge, mother's containment, women's rites	Women's routinised activities
How is women's participation in the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict resolution affairs restricted by their socio-cultural beliefs, traditions and practices?	Anti-participation factors	hierarchy, patriarchy, decision-making by men, domestic and care role by women, men's authority to represent, male interested parties	Male dominance
		Islam, women's body	Islamic beliefs and practices
		Spiritual, women's body, ritual secrecy, menstruation, taboos	African Traditional Religion beliefs and practices
		Provocative words, insults, rumour-mongering	'gendered language'

Author's construction, 2023.

## APPENDIX 2: FIELDWORK INTERVIEW GUIDE

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR** Women chiefs, NGOs, family representatives to the Committee of Eminent Chiefs (CEC), women groups, community leadership, youth groups, local governance system, chieftaincy and traditional authority, Dagbon citizens, Regional Peace Council, Regional/District Security Council (known as RESEC or DISEC).

**Research Title:** “Hybrid but one-sided: Women and hybrid peace orders in Dagbon, Northern Ghana”

**Purpose:** This interview guide solicits information about women’s participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Dagbon. Specifically, the questions probe women’s (non) participation in the formal conflict resolution after the 2002 clashes and how Dagbon’s tradition and culture promote or restrict women’s participation.

1. Date of interview .....
2. Status of respondent .....
3. Place of Interview .....
4. What respondent likes to be called (pseudonym) .....

**Getting Started:** Greetings... and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am Felix Dade, pursuing a Master’s in Development Studies at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. I kindly request that you call me Felix.

I know little about Dagbon’s culture, so I am here to learn from you. There are no right or wrong answers in this interview, only your experiences and reflections on issues in Dagbon.

The insights I seek to gather from this interview are solely for writing my master’s thesis. I assure you again confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, and respect for you, your views and tradition are cardinal to academic research in Finland and my university; hence I am bound by them in this interview.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; therefore, you can withdraw or decline to answer a question without reason.

I request your permission to record the interview with an audio tape recorder. Please do you consent to be recorded? The audio recording from this interview will not be shared with a third party under any circumstance. The recording is for writing my thesis and will be terminated after that. I could share a summary of the results/transcripts of the recording with you if that is fine with you. In that case, which medium do you wish to receive?

Before we start the interview, do you have any questions for me?

### **Introductory (Starting the interview)**

- Please briefly tell me a bit about yourself and your work in Dagbon (peacebuilding, women, development, local or traditional authority)
- How long have you/ organisation been involved in (peacebuilding, women, development, local or traditional authority) issues in Dagbon?
- What motivated you or your organisation to get involved in (peacebuilding, women, development, local or traditional authority) issues in Dagbon?
- Tell me what the experience in Dagbon concerning peacebuilding has been so far.

**Women's contribution to peace in Dagbon**

1. I know women did not participate in the formal peace process. Why is that?
2. How do women contribute(d) to the peace in Dagbon informally or in other ways?
3. Do you think the peace process and outcome would have been different if women had participated? How?

**Dagbon's tradition and women's capacity for peacebuilding**

4. We know that cultural factors could influence women's participation in the formal peace process. Can you share some of these factors that:
  - a) promote women's participation in peace
  - b) hinder women's participation in peace
5. What special qualities and skills do women in Dagbon have that benefit peace work?
6. What additional capacity, skills and qualities should women have to be included in any formal peace process in the future?

**Dagbon and women's peace work in future**

7. Can you tell me what should be done differently in future peace processes regarding women?
8. How do you think women can be involved in the formal peace processes?
9. If women were more involved in the future, what would they contribute to the formal peace process?
10. Thank you. Would you like to add anything or ask me a question?

## APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT

### Informed Consent

Thesis Title: Hybrid but One-sided: Women and hybrid peace orders in Dagbon, Northern Ghana.

#### Student & Contact Information

Felix Dade  
Department of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
University of Jyväskylä  
Finland

#### Supervisor & Contact Information

Associate Professor Tiina Kontinen  
Department of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
University of Jyväskylä  
Finland

This consent form, which you shall keep a copy of for your records, is only a part of the informed consent process. It outlines information about your voluntary participation in the fieldwork being undertaken. Should you require further information not stated here, kindly ask me. Please, you are requested to read the form carefully to understand the issues presented.

1. This study aims to understand women's participation and inclusion in the formal conflict resolution processes in Dagbon post the 2002 conflict. In particular, it seeks to investigate how women participated in formal conflict resolution processes and in which ways the culture and tradition of Dagbon encourage or hinder their participation/inclusion.
2. The one-on-one interview will be held with you at a time and venue agreed upon by the student and you in a way that protects confidentiality.
3. Your acceptance to participate in this study demonstrates that you agree to an interview in which you share your insights and views into how women in Dagbon participated in the formal conflict resolution processes and the cultural enablers and constraints they face.
4. The interview will last about one-and-a-half hours and will be recorded with an audio tape recorder. Later in the year, interview transcripts will be shared with you to review and comment on, where necessary. The transcripts will be emailed, postal, or through my research assistant to your address. Unfortunately, due to my quick departure to Finland to continue my studies, I cannot deliver transcripts in person.
5. Your participation in the study is voluntary. Thus, you can withdraw from the study at any time or decline to answer a question without reason. When you choose to withdraw from the study, you may inform me. As the data is for my thesis, withdrawal notices should kindly be made before the end of September - the end period of the fieldwork in Dagbon.
6. Data from the interviews are for academic purposes, that is, writing my master's thesis. By the nature of the thesis topic, no major risks are anticipated. However, a break or discontinuance will be activated where participants feel emotions and sorrow.



7. Pseudonyms will ensure confidentiality and anonymity so that the views you express and your identity are not made apparent. Also, contact information and interview data you provide will be stored confidentially on a computer with two-level passwords accessible to only the student and, in limited cases (contact information), the research assistant. Data gathered will be used for declared purposes only.
8. Interview data accessed will be terminated by May 2023, when the thesis is approved.
9. The thesis results will be published and shared with the university community, at conferences, and with organisations interested in women and peace issues.

I commit to respecting and upholding the confidentiality terms associated with the study, including securing your data and the insights you share with me.

Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

By signing this consent form, you indicate that you have read and understood its content, specifically the information concerning your participation in the study. Also, you agree to participate in the study.

This consent form does not waive your legal rights nor absolve the student from their responsibilities. Your participation is voluntary, hence can be withdrawn at any time without consequence. You can also decline to answer a question, continue to ask questions concerning the study, and request information about your participation in light of new happenings.

The University of Jyväskylä has approved this fieldwork, including the interview process. You may write to the student (listed above) for further information and clarification.

Signature of student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participants \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Send a summary of results and transcripts to me via:

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Postal address :

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(Via)

Research assistant

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## APPENDIX 4: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Research Title: Hybrid but One-sided: Women and hybrid peace orders in Dagbon, Northern Ghana.  
Student & Contact Information

Felix Dade  
Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
University of Jyväskylä  
Finland

Name and address of Research Assistant and address \_\_\_\_\_

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I \_\_\_\_\_ have been hired by Felix Dade (herein referred to as “the student”) as a research assistant in his fieldwork in Yendi. In this capacity, I agree to the following:

1. Keep research information shared with me, or which I become privy to in the course of the fieldwork, in any shape or form, confidential without divulging to a third party;
2. Secure all research data and information of participants, in any shape or form, gathered through the fieldwork while they are in my care;
3. Return all research materials, information and data in my care to the student when the fieldwork engagement is completed;
4. Consult the student before accessing research files, devices, and information.
5. Upon completing the translation from Dagbane to English, I shall immediately delete the recorded audio files from the interviews in my care.
6. Consult the student before entering a discussion with participants and parties to the fieldwork.
7. Respect fieldwork participants, their views, and the culture and tradition they hold dear.
8. Not to undertake any activity or action that calls into disrepute the fieldwork, is potentially harmful and detrimental to participants and the student and breaches the confidentiality and other ethical considerations espoused in the fieldwork.

I hereby declare that I have read, understood and agreed to abide by the declarations and procedures in this agreement, including those that pertain to the confidentiality of participants and parties associated with the fieldwork.

Signature of Research Assistant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of student \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5: LETTER TO INSTITUTIONS (SAMPLE)

### Request to conduct a research interview

I humbly request a research interview with you during my master's thesis fieldwork in the Dagbon Kingdom in September 2022.

I come from the Eastern Region of Ghana but currently pursuing a master's degree in Development Studies at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. The topic of my master's thesis is "Hybrid but One-sided: Women and Hybrid Peace Orders in Dagbon, Northern Ghana," in which I seek to understand women's participation in the formal chieftaincy conflict resolution efforts in Dagbon. Also, I want to explore how Dagbon's culture, tradition and social factors influence women's participation.

I understand that \_\_\_\_\_ is a major grassroots women's skills training and economic empowerment organisation in Dagbon. Hence, I consider your experience and insights pertinent to understanding women's participation in the formal peace process. Also, I wish to gather from you how Dagbon's traditions, customs and associated social factors encourage or hinder women's participation.

The one-on-one interview could last between 60-90 minutes. I aim for interviews to begin in the 2nd week of September. However, the specific date and time are subject to your availability. I wish to assure you that the insights I gather from the interview are only to write my thesis report, and the cardinal research ethics will be adhered to. Also, the entry and exit protocols of your organisation will be followed.

As I have not yet arrived in Ghana, should you require further information on my research, my field assistant \_\_\_\_\_ can be reached at \_\_\_\_\_. **However**, I will take steps to revert when he receives a request.

I count on your kind acceptance and assistance during my research fieldwork.

Yours faithfully,

Felix Dade  
Department of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

## APPENDIX 6: LETTER TO YA-NA

19th July 2022

**The Overload of Dagbon  
Gbewaa Palace, Yendi  
Northern Region, Ghana**

Your Majesty Ya Na Abukari II,

### **Request to undertake master's thesis fieldwork in Dagbon**

I request Your Majesty's permission to undertake a month of research fieldwork for my master's thesis in Dagbon in September 2022.

I am pursuing a master's in Development Studies at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. The topic of my master's thesis is "Hybrid but one-sided: Women and Hybrid Peace Orders in Dagbon, Northern Ghana," in which I seek to understand women's participation in the formal chieftaincy conflict resolution efforts in Dagbon as well as the influences of Dagbon's culture, tradition and social factors on their participation.

Your Majesty, during the fieldwork in Dagbon, I would be interviewing women chiefs, leaders of religious organisations, heads of local and regional peace organisations, leaders of women groups, Civil Society Organisations in your jurisdiction, opinion leaders, and perhaps, some officials from your esteemed office. I wish to assure Ya Na that my fieldwork is purely for academic purposes. In view of that, I would strive to respect the traditions, laws and protocols of Dagbon during my stay and will exercise good judgement, sensitivity and neutrality during the fieldwork.

If the office of Your Majesty requires it, I could avail myself at the Palace to undertake any traditional protocol expected of visitors to Dagbon.

Thank you, and I count on your blessings, Ya Na.

Yours faithfully,

**Felix Dade**

Department of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

## APPENDIX 7: LETTERS TO DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES (SAMPLE)

The District Chief Executive

### Request to undertake master's thesis fieldwork (in the district)

I humbly write to inform you of my intention to undertake about a month of research fieldwork for my master's thesis in \_\_\_\_\_ in September 2022.

I am pursuing a master's in Development Studies at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. The topic of my master's thesis is "Hybrid but One-sided: Women and Hybrid Peace Orders in Dagbon, Northern Ghana," in which I seek to understand the participation of women in the conflict mediation efforts in Dagbon as well as the influences of Dagbon culture, tradition and social factors on their participation.

I will interview heads of peace organisations, civil society organisations, and opinion leaders in the district.

I assure you that my fieldwork is purely for academic purposes. Because of that, I would strive to respect the bylaws in \_\_\_\_\_ and will exercise good judgment, sensitivity and neutrality during my fieldwork.

I count on your kind understanding and blessings

Yours faithfully,

**Felix Dade**

Department of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
University of Jyväskylä, Finland