



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Ghana

Ghana – GHA36553 – Stool of the
Kontihene – Seikwa village – Christians –
Traditional beliefs – State protection –
Police
19 May 2010

1. Please provide background on the traditions and rituals of the stool of Kontihene, including succession rules. Please include information on whether left handed people cannot be Kontihene.

While no reports were found on the traditions and rituals of the stool of the Kontihene in Seikwa, specifically, there is some information available on the traditional chieftaincy among the Brong people of the Akan group.¹ Sources indicate that the Kontihene is an important chief, second only to the “paramount chief” (Omanhene). The Kontihene is responsible for various traditional duties within his/her community, for example pouring libations (liquid offerings) to the ancestors and settling disputes in traditional court. Succession is matrilineal: the elders select a suitable candidate, usually from a royal family and often with a consideration of additional factors like education level and personal success. No information was found to suggest that left-handedness is an impediment to becoming Kontihene.

The Brong people of the Akan group

The Brong, also known as the Bono or Abron,² are part of the Akan, a “culturally homogenous” group that makes up approximately 46 per cent of Ghana’s total population of 22 million.³ (No reports were found of a Ghanaian “Bissi tribe”, but sources identify the Aduana as an old and important clan within the Akan.⁴) Dr Phil Bartle, a former academic at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana and an expert on Akan culture, indicated that information about the stool of the Kontihene in relation to the Akan was applicable to the Brong.⁵

The Kontihene

¹ Konadu, K 2007, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*, Routledge, New York, p 33 – Attachment 1.

² Olson, J 1996, *The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary*, Greenwood Press, Westport USA, p 5 – Attachment 2.

³ Omenyo, C 2001, “Akan Religion”, *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions*, ed. S Glazier, Routledge, New York, pp 26-31,
http://books.google.com/books?id=pF6MxGrqdUwC&pg=PA26&lpg=PA26&dq=religious+beliefs+and+practices+Akan+Ghana&source=bl&ots=-K9tO7M3pu&sig=a9RGTclq1SHmG4QNKDvKf_KbTUg&hl=en&ei=K6PoS9_QJHq7AOK67yrCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CB0Q6AEwATgK#v=onepage&q=religious%20beliefs%20and%20practices%20Akan%20Ghana&f=false - Accessed 11 May 2010 – Attachment 3; US State Department 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – Ghana*, 26 October – Attachment 4.

⁴ See for example: Konadu, K 2007, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*, Routledge, New York, p 33 – Attachment 1 and Ossei-Akoto, B, n.d., “Akans and their Various Abusua”,
<http://www.asanteman.freeservers.com/custom.html> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 5.

⁵ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6. Dr Bartle has also provided advice to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada on traditional chieftaincy.

According to Professor Kwasi Konadu, a historian who has researched and written on the Brong, the Kontihene has an “integral [role]... within the indigenous Bono[/Brong] polity”: this chief is “second in command and assumes the role of omanhene [the paramount chief] in his absence”.⁶ Dr Bartle describes the Kontihene as an “important elder in the chief’s court”⁷; s/he is a “kingmaker”, that is, “one of the seven elders in the chief’s court who choose a new chief”.⁸ If the kingmakers decide to destool (or take away the position) of a chief, it is the Kontihene who “performs the act by demanding that the chief give up his sandals to the Kontihene”.⁹ The Kontihene also “holds his own court in his stool house, and settles disputes between those in his jurisdiction”.¹⁰

Practices and rituals

Regarding the practices and rituals associated with the stool of the Kontihene, Dr Bartle advised:

As with all Akan elders, libations to the ancestors: = alcohol poured on the ground, and God, Mother nature, gods and ancestors are called to witness an event, to approve a decision or to bring blessings on those named. If a sheep is to be sacrificed (for very important events), this is done by a young man under the supervision of the elder (e.g. Kontihene). A Kontihene may have his own linguist to pour libations for him, and can do it himself... The stools hold the spirits of the ancestors, and the body of the elder (e.g. Kontihene) is possessed (continuously) by the ancestors. During the enstoolment the elder (e.g. Kontihene) touches one of the ancestral stools and is given that stool name while in office.¹¹

When requested, the Kontihene will also pour libations in connection with the opening of public buildings, for example schools, churches or mosques.¹²

Succession

Professor Konadu notes that the Brong people are, like the Akan more broadly, matrilineal, “in that the processes of inheritance, in terms of stool (leadership) succession and marriage, are authenticated through the matrilineal or mother’s lineage”.¹³ By way of contextualisation, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* notes that:

Traditional Akan society is composed of exogamous matrilineal clans, the members of which trace their descent from a common female ancestor: these clans are

⁶ Konadu, K 2007, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*, Routledge, New York, p 36 – Attachment 1.

⁷ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

⁸ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, “Ghana: Succession traditions for the position of Krontihene in Abetifi Kwahu, Eastern Region, and consequences for refusing the position; names of current and past holders of the position”, 1 November, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,IRBC,,GHA,,3f7d4d9831.0.html> - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 7.

⁹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, “Ghana: Succession traditions for the position of Krontihene in Abetifi Kwahu, Eastern Region, and consequences for refusing the position; names of current and past holders of the position”, 1 November, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,IRBC,,GHA,,3f7d4d9831.0.html> - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 7.

¹⁰ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

¹¹ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

¹² Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

¹³ Konadu, K 2007, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*, Routledge, New York, p 36 – Attachment 1.

hierarchically organized and are subdivided into localized matrilineages, which form the basic social and political units of Akan society.”¹⁴

Dr Bartle has likened these localised matrilineages to “corporations”: a lineage “owns the ancestral stools of the office of the Kontihene”¹⁵ and it is the elders of the lineage who must “provide a new chief to replace the one who has died or been removed”.¹⁶ An academic dissertation completed at the University of Helsinki indicates that the chief is selected from an elite or “royal” family, “usually the group whose ancestress and other ancestors first found the village and are thus the custodians of the land”, but Dr Bartle has clarified that:

It is not automatic succession like for the King of England. There may be a half dozen persons who are attractive to the elders... The lineage elders try to find the most successful and influential person to fill the post.¹⁷

Once they have chosen, the elders “present the name of the new elder (e.g. Kontihene) to the chief’s court and the court approves or not”.¹⁸

Physical impediments

No information was found to suggest that left-handed people cannot take up the stool of Kontihene. On the subject of physical barriers to becoming a Kontihene, Dr Bartle advised that an “elder cannot be seriously visibly deformed, cannot be circumcised, must be mentally competent, and appear normal and sane”.¹⁹ A thesis from Helsinki University said that being circumcised was no longer a barrier to becoming a traditional chief, in part because circumcision soon after birth had become so common.²⁰ Dr Bartle noted that there are no gender constraints on the position: a woman can be a Kontihene, though she “may not enter the sacred ancestral stool room when menstruating”.²¹

2. Please provide brief information on the village of Seikwa including demographic make up (religions, traditions etc).

Seikwa is a village in Tain district in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. (Please see map at Attachment 11.²²) It has a population of approximately 9,196 and is one of only five “urban settlements” in the district.²³ A US Peace Corps volunteer based in Seikwa stated on his blog on 3 August 2008 that the village has its own “market, police station, fire

¹⁴ “Akan” 2010, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 17 May, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/11369/Akan> - Accessed 18 May 2010 – Attachment 8.

¹⁵ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, “Ghana: Succession traditions for the position of Krontihene in Abetifi Kwahu, Eastern Region, and consequences for refusing the position; names of current and past holders of the position”, 1 November, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,IRBC,,GHA,,3f7d4d9831,0.html> - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 7.

¹⁶ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

¹⁷ Bartle, P n.d., “Akan Studies – Correspondence”, Website of Dr Phil Bartle, <http://www.scn.org/rdi/kw-cor.htm> - Accessed 18 May 2010 – Attachment 9.

¹⁸ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

¹⁹ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

²⁰ Crentsil, P 2007, “Deaths, ancestors, and HIV among the Akan of Ghana” (academic dissertation), University of Helsinki, Helsinki, p 83 – Attachment 10.

²¹ Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

²² “Map of Ghana” 2005, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations – Cartographic Section, <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/ghana.pdf> - Accessed 18 May 2010 – Attachment 11.

²³ “Brong Ahafo Region – Tain” 2010, Ghana Districts website, 14 May, <http://www.ghanalocalassemblies.com/districts/?r=10&=49&sa=4426> - Accessed 29 April 2010 – Attachment 12.

station, and full-service transit station, as well as a full primary school, junior high, and...senior high school”, and “in lieu of a full hospital, [Seikwa] has a clinic and basic pharmacy”.²⁴

Sources indicate that a traditional council presides over Seikwa. Multiple news stories refer to a “paramount chief” (or “Omanhene”) of the “Seikwa traditional area”, with one source indicating that the area also has “sub-chiefs”.²⁵ No reports were found naming these sub-chiefs. However, sources did name the paramount chief as “Nana Kwaku Dwuma Ankoana II”²⁶, and a Ghana News Agency story reported that “Nana Ankoana is a member of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church”, which suggests that it is possible for a traditional chief in the Seikwa area to identify as a Christian.²⁷ (For more on traditional chiefs and Christianity, please see question four.)

Little was found on Seikwa traditions, but a news story indicated that the village celebrates an “annual yam festival”, “Punuwonfojo”, in October.²⁸

While it was not possible to locate religious and ethnic demographic statistics on Seikwa, this information was available for Tain district, in which Seikwa is located.

Tain District

Tain District has a population of approximately 90,000 and most of its workforce is employed in agriculture-related industries.²⁹ According to a Ghanaian government

²⁴ Dobbe, G 2008, “In which our intrepid hero undertakes domestic proclivities”, Grant Dobbe weblog (US Peace Corps volunteer in Seikwa), 3 August, <http://grant.dobbe.us/2008/08/in-which-our-intrepid-hero-undertakes-domestic-proclivities/> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 13.

²⁵ Nuamah, A 2010, “Ghana: Tuobodom crisis – a conflict between tradition and modernity”, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 14 April, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201004141056.html> - Accessed 18 May 2010 – Attachment 14; “Chief appeals to Electoral College to give him the nod” 2009, *Ghana News Agency*, 29 January, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/200656/1/chief-appeals-to-electoral-college-to-give-him-the.html> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 15; “Seikwa Honours Satellite Midfielder” 2009, Ghana Government Official Portal, 22 October, http://64.22.95.108/~ghanago/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=165:seikwa-honours-satellite-midfielder&catid=48:brong-ahafo&Itemid=197 - Accessed 29 April 2010 – Attachment 16; “Manhyia says accident car was not part of Otumfuo’s convoy” 2006, *Business Ghana*, 29 November, <http://www.businessghana.com/portal/news/index.php?op=getNews&id=54259> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 17; “Chief calls for national conference on funerals” 2009, *Ghanaweb.com*, 19 February, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=157930> – Accessed 29 April 2010 – Attachment 18; on last point, see “Seikwa traditional council refutes allegations” 2007, *Ghanaweb.com*, June 12, <http://mobile.ghanaweb.com/wap/article.php?ID=125488> - Accessed 29 April 2010 – Attachment 19.

²⁶ “Chief appeals to Electoral College to give him the nod” 2009, *Ghana News Agency*, 29 January, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/200656/1/chief-appeals-to-electoral-college-to-give-him-the.html> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 15; “Seikwa Honours Satellite Midfielder” 2009, Ghana Government Official Portal, 22 October, http://64.22.95.108/~ghanago/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=165:seikwa-honours-satellite-midfielder&catid=48:brong-ahafo&Itemid=197 - Accessed 29 April 2010 – Attachment 16; “Manhyia says accident car was not part of Otumfuo’s convoy” 2006, *Business Ghana*, 29 November, <http://www.businessghana.com/portal/news/index.php?op=getNews&id=54259> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 17; “Chief calls for national conference on funerals” 2009, *Ghanaweb.com*, 19 February, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=157930> – Accessed 29 April 2010 – Attachment 18.

²⁷ “Chief appeals to Electoral College to give him the nod” 2009, *Ghana News Agency*, 29 January, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/200656/1/chief-appeals-to-electoral-college-to-give-him-the.html> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 15.

²⁸ “Seikwa Honours Satellite Midfielder” 2009, Ghana Government Official Portal, 22 October, http://64.22.95.108/~ghanago/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=165:seikwa-honours-satellite-midfielder&catid=48:brong-ahafo&Itemid=197 - Accessed 29 April 2010 – Attachment 16.

²⁹ “Brong Ahafo Region – Tain” 2010, Ghana Districts website, 14 May, <http://www.ghanalocalassemblies.com/districts/?r=10&=49&sa=4426> - Accessed 29 April 2010 – Attachment 12.

website, Tain is “quite heterogenous with [the] Banda ethnic group forming the majority. The other ethnic groups in the district are Kologo, Bono[/Brong] and Lugei.”³⁰

Christians are the largest religious group in the District, making up nearly 72 per cent of the population.³¹ Muslims constitute about 16 per cent, and eight per cent of Tain District residents are followers of traditional African religions.³² Another 4.3 per cent are not affiliated with any religious group.³³ The majority of Christians in Tain District are Catholics (approximately 48 per cent), followed by Protestants (31 per cent) and Pentecostals (21 per cent).³⁴

3. Please provide information on the interaction of Christianity and traditional beliefs. Are there many people who worship both?

Christianity is the majority religion across Ghana and in the Brong Ahafo Region.³⁵ The US State Department’s 2009 *International Religious Freedom Report* states that almost 70 per cent of the country’s population identify as Christians, while less than nine per cent follow indigenous religions.³⁶ However, traditional religion cannot be entirely extricated from Christianity in a Ghanaian context. According to the US State Department, Christianity in Ghana “often includes an overlay of traditional beliefs” and sources indicate that many Christian Ghanaians retain indigenous religious beliefs and practices.³⁷ Some churches have attempted to integrate indigenous worldviews and religious beliefs into Christianity in order to make it more relevant and meaningful for Ghanaians,³⁸ while others – for example Pentecostal churches – are less tolerant.³⁹

Ghanaian Christians and traditional religion

³⁰ “Tain District – Cultural heritage and customs” n.d., Ghana Districts government website, <http://tain.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 20.

³¹ “Tain District – Cultural heritage and customs” n.d., Ghana Districts government website, <http://tain.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 20.

³² “Tain District – Cultural heritage and customs” n.d., Ghana Districts government website, <http://tain.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 20.

³³ “Tain District – Cultural heritage and customs” n.d., Ghana Districts government website, <http://tain.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 20.

³⁴ “Tain District – Cultural heritage and customs” n.d., Ghana Districts government website, <http://tain.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 20.

³⁵ US State Department 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – Ghana*, 26 October – Attachment 4; “References (Brong Ahafo Region)” n.d., *ModernGhana.com*, http://www.modernghana.com/GhanaHome/regions/brongahafo.asp?menu_id=6&sub_menu_id=14&gender=- - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 21.

³⁶ US State Department 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – Ghana*, 26 October – Attachment 4.

³⁷ US State Department 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report 2005 – Ghana*, 8 November, sec 1 – Attachment 22; Ubink, J 2008, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts and the Role of the State in Peri-urban Ghana*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p 156 – Attachment 23; Pew Research Centre 2010, “Ghana – Interactive Database: Traditional Religion”, *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Pew Forum website, <http://features.pewforum.org/africa/country.php?c=82> - Accessed 17 May 2010 – Attachment 24.

³⁸ Omenyo, C 2001, “Akan Religion”, *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions*, ed. S Glazier, Routledge, New York, pp 26-31, http://books.google.com/books?id=pF6MxGrqUwC&pg=PA26&lpg=PA26&dq=religious+beliefs+and+practices+Akan+Ghana&source=bl&ots=-K9tO7M3pu&sig=a9RGTcIq1SHmG4QNKDvKf_KbTUg&hl=en&ei=K6PoS9_QJHq7AOK67yrCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CB0Q6AEwATgK#v=onepage&q=religious%20beliefs%20and%20practices%20Akan%20Ghana&f=false - Accessed 11 May 2010 – Attachment 3.

³⁹ Atiemo, A 2006, “International human rights, religious pluralism and the future of the chieftaincy in Ghana”, *Exchange: A Journal of Missiology and Ecumenical Studies* Vol 35(4), pp 360-382 – Attachment 25; Ubink, J 2008, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts and the Role of the State in Peri-urban Ghana*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p 155-156 – Attachment 23.

Various sources indicate that traditional religion has a place in the lives of many Christian Ghanaians. A Baptist missionary organisation commented that “[b]oth Christian and Muslim groups are greatly influenced by the old thought patterns of African Traditional Religion”, noting, as an example, that a “local chief” might be a “good church member” and “pour libation to the ancestors... as well as make sacrifices on special occasions as has been done for years”.⁴⁰ In 2010, the Catholic Archbishop of Ghana reportedly identified “as a challenge” the “inability of most Africans to dichotomize Christianity... and culture”.⁴¹ As a consequence, he said, “some Christian converts still live with some practices in African Traditional Religion” that were incongruent with Christianity.⁴²

These somewhat anecdotal remarks are corroborated by an academic source and the results of a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (PRC), a Washington-based non-partisan think tank. In her study of traditional chieftaincy, *In the Land of the Chiefs*, Dr Janine Ubink said that “[m]any Christians and Muslims still condone or adhere to facets of traditional religion and ancestor worship”.⁴³ Research conducted by the PRC and released in 2010 indicated that a significant proportion of Christian Ghanaians retain at least some traditional beliefs and practices.⁴⁴ For example, 45 per cent of respondents said they believed that “certain people [could] cast spells and curses” and 26 per cent said that they participated in traditional ceremonies to honour ancestors.⁴⁵ Some Christians, however, do “refuse to partake in traditional religious practices”.⁴⁶

The church’s stance

A Ghanaian Christian’s stance on traditional religion may be influenced by that of his or her church. Churches reportedly vary in their acceptance of traditional religious beliefs and practises. Dr Ubink said that while “orthodox churches... see no harm in traditional practices such a pouring libation and celebrating [traditional festivals]”, some charismatic churches “agitate against” traditional religious practices.⁴⁷ A lecturer at the University of Ghana said that “Pentecostal culture is antagonistic towards... traditional religion”, a statement supported by the US State Department’s 2009 report on religious freedom, which stated that some Christians, “particularly laypersons associated with evangelical groups, continued to preach intolerance for other groups such as Muslims and indigenous religious groups”.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ “Africa: Changing Lives – Ghana” n.d., Baptist Mid-Missions website,

<http://www.bmm.org/BMM/WhereWeServe/Africa/ghana.htm> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 26.

⁴¹ “His Grace the Archbishop Charles Palmer addressed the Chapter Assembly” n.d. (probably 2010), Don Bosco Technical Institute website, <http://www.donbosco-ashaiman.com/home.html> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 27.

⁴² “His Grace the Archbishop Charles Palmer addressed the Chapter Assembly” n.d. (probably 2010), Don Bosco Technical Institute website, <http://www.donbosco-ashaiman.com/home.html> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 27.

⁴³ Ubink, J 2008, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts and the Role of the State in Peri-urban Ghana*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p 156 – Attachment 23.

⁴⁴ Pew Research Centre 2010, “Ghana – Interactive Database: Traditional Religion”, *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Pew Forum website, <http://features.pewforum.org/africa/country.php?c=82> - Accessed 17 May 2010 – Attachment 24.

⁴⁵ Pew Research Centre 2010, “Ghana – Interactive Database: Traditional Religion”, *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Pew Forum website, <http://features.pewforum.org/africa/country.php?c=82> - Accessed 17 May 2010 – Attachment 24.

⁴⁶ Ubink, J 2008, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts and the Role of the State in Peri-urban Ghana*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p 156 – Attachment 23.

⁴⁷ Ubink, J 2008, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts and the Role of the State in Peri-urban Ghana*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p 156 – Attachment 23.

⁴⁸ Atiemo, A 2006, “International human rights, religious pluralism and the future of the chieftaincy in Ghana”, *Exchange: A Journal of Missiology and Ecumenical Studies* Vol 35(4), pp 360-382 – Attachment 25; US State Department 2009, *International Religious Freedom Report 2009 – Ghana*, 26 October – Attachment 4.

Traditionalists' stance

There is little information available on the position of traditionalists (i.e., traditional elders or followers of traditional religion) towards members of their community who are Christians. The prevalence of Christianity throughout Ghana is such that this is probably a reality for many traditionalists, and a lecturer at the University of Ghana, Abamfo Atiemo, has indicated that conflicts are more likely to arise when Christians come from groups with “exclusivist tendencies” (for example Pentecostals) and refuse to participate in customary practices or obey rules imposed by traditional elders.⁴⁹ Atiemo related several such incidents occurring in the late 1990s and commented:

It seems that African traditional societies are tolerant so long as conversions to new religions of some of its members do not seriously collide with the community's beliefs and practices.⁵⁰

The US State Department has also reported clashes between charismatic Christians and traditionalists in previous years. For example:

- In 2006 members of a church and a traditional authority “physically confronted” each other after members of the church “violated the annual monthly ban on drumming imposed by traditional authorities”.⁵¹ This was the latest incident in a longstanding conflict over loud church worship sessions.⁵²
- In 2002 in Brong-Ahafo Region, a mob set fire to a church following traditionalists' accusations that the church had preached against a traditional festival and a ban on fishing on the Tano River. Traditionalists denied involvement in the fire and the conflict was resolved peacefully.⁵³

Regarding the Akan people in particular, Dr Bartle advised that they tend to be “syncretic”, “adding new onto old rather than removing the old”.⁵⁴

4. Is there any information on killings, violence towards or rejection of people who refuse to take up the Kontihene, or repercussions for those who refuse to give up Christianity?

Many reliable sources suggest that among the Akan there are no physically harsh repercussions for those who refuse to become Kontihene, and any punishments are usually of a social nature. Although one Ghanaian news story reported an attempt to forcibly enstool a chief, given the location in which this occurred, those concerned were probably not Akan.

Dr Bartle indicated that people who decline the stool of the Kontihene do not face serious danger as a result, advising that:

⁴⁹ Atiemo, A 2006, “International human rights, religious pluralism and the future of the chieftaincy in Ghana”, *Exchange: A Journal of Missiology and Ecumenical Studies* Vol 35(4), pp 360-382, see p 371-372 – Attachment 25.

⁵⁰ Atiemo, A 2006, “International human rights, religious pluralism and the future of the chieftaincy in Ghana”, *Exchange: A Journal of Missiology and Ecumenical Studies* Vol 35(4), pp 360-382, see p 371 – Attachment 25.

⁵¹ US State Department 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report 2006 – Ghana*, 15 September, sec 3 – Attachment 28.

⁵² The 2005 and 2004 International Religious Freedom reports also mention this: see US State Department 2005, *International Religious Freedom Report 2005 – Ghana*, 8 November, sec 3 – Attachment 29 and US State Department 2004, *International Religious Freedom Report 2004 – Ghana*, 15 September, sec 3 – Attachment 30.

⁵³ US State Department 2004, *International Religious Freedom Report 2004 – Ghana*, 15 September, sec 3 – Attachment 30.

⁵⁴ “Brong Ahafo, the nations, food basket” 2007, Ghana Culture government website, 14 March, <http://www.ghanaculture.gov.gh/index1.php/09/swf/privatecontent/File/CISP%20Ghana/privatecontent/File/index1.php?linkid=65&archiveid=393&page=1&adate=14/03/2007> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 31.

The one who refuses does so by running away and staying away for a few years until the issue blows over. He will get scorn but no physical punishment. He is at a disadvantage because he could not easily appear in the chief's court to argue a case or plead a ruling...⁵⁵

This information broadly accords with two research responses from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) that cite academic experts on Akan culture.⁵⁶ To summarise key points, the advice was that forced enstoolment was rare in modern times and elders had "little resource" to punish a person who refused to become a chief.⁵⁷ Punishments were usually of a social nature and could be harsh, for example social ostracism or banishment.⁵⁸ One expert advised that even those who followed non-indigenous religions such as Christianity might fear that their clan's ancestors would punish them for refusing a stool.⁵⁹ Overall, it was unlikely that the person who refused a position of tradition office would "suffer any significant consequence" and though they might "incur the wrath of the elders, ...[there was] no evidence of any harm done as a result".⁶⁰

Similarly, the UK Home Office's Ghana "Guidance Note" states that "there is no specific evidence that individuals who claim they are pursued by family, community or tribal leaders to become the next chieftain or high priest in fact encounter mistreatment".⁶¹

The only modern-day report found of an attempt at forced enstoolment was a 2006 article in the *Ghanaian Chronicle*.⁶² The paper reported that a parliamentary candidate chosen to become chief had been "abducted by traditionalists" in the city of Teshie near Accra, in the Greater Accra Region. He resisted, escaped, and went into hiding. A few months

⁵⁵ Bartle, P 2010, "Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region", 6 May, see question seven – Attachment 6.

⁵⁶ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, "Ghana: Succession traditions for the position of Krontihene in Abetifi Kwahu, Eastern Region, and consequences for refusing the position; names of current and past holders of the position", 1 November, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,IRBC,,GHA,,3f7d4d9831,0.html> - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 7; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, "Ghana: Consequences of refusing to assume an inherited position of tribal or clan chief; state protection available to the individual (2004 – 2006)", 11 October, http://www2.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450515 - Accessed 23 July 2009 – Attachment 32.

⁵⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, "Ghana: Succession traditions for the position of Krontihene in Abetifi Kwahu, Eastern Region, and consequences for refusing the position; names of current and past holders of the position", 1 November, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,IRBC,,GHA,,3f7d4d9831,0.html> - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 7.

⁵⁸ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, "Ghana: Succession traditions for the position of Krontihene in Abetifi Kwahu, Eastern Region, and consequences for refusing the position; names of current and past holders of the position", 1 November, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,IRBC,,GHA,,3f7d4d9831,0.html> - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 7; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, "Ghana: Consequences of refusing to assume an inherited position of tribal or clan chief; state protection available to the individual (2004 – 2006)", 11 October, http://www2.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450515 - Accessed 23 July 2009 – Attachment 32.

⁵⁹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, "Ghana: Consequences of refusing to assume an inherited position of tribal or clan chief; state protection available to the individual (2004 – 2006)", 11 October, http://www2.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450515 - Accessed 23 July 2009 – Attachment 32.

⁶⁰ "Brong Ahafo, the nations, food basket" 2007, Ghana Culture government website, 14 March, <http://www.ghanaculture.gov.gh/index1.php/09/swf/privatecontent/File/CISP%20Ghana/privatecontent/File/index1.php?linkid=65&archiveid=393&page=1&adate=14/03/2007> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 31.

⁶¹ UK Home Office 2009, "Operational Guidance Note: Ghana", 28 January, see p 7 – Attachment 33.

⁶² Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, "Ghana: Consequences of refusing to assume an inherited position of tribal or clan chief; state protection available to the individual (2004 – 2006)", 11 October, http://www2.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450515 - Accessed 23 July 2009 – Attachment 32.

earlier, another man had “died under mysterious circumstances, after he had been captured and taken through some rituals, in a bid to [install] him on a traditional stool”, and “he had declined”.⁶³ Given where these events occurred, it is more likely that those involved were Ga people rather than Akan, since Teshie is traditionally a Ga area.⁶⁴

Christianity

Sources indicate that Christian Ghanaians do not encounter serious problems if they refuse to relinquish their faith in order to take up positions of traditional office. In fact, no reports were found of elders making such demands, though chiefs who refuse to perform customary rituals risk losing their stools. Reports indicate that those chosen to become traditional leaders – and those already in these positions – may come under pressure from churches that consider these roles to involve counter-Christian activities.

Being a traditional leader and a Christian are not mutually exclusive in Ghana. In 2006 the BBC reported that a “growing number of chiefs and queen mothers are Christians”, and Dr Bartle indicated that Akan chiefs are frequently adherents of Christianity or other non-indigenous religions.⁶⁵ As noted in the response to question one, the Paramount Chief of Seikwa traditional region is a Seventh Day Adventist.⁶⁶

Yet there can be tensions between an individual’s Christianity and traditional chieftaincy duties. The BBC has described the position of traditional leaders who are Christians as one of “painful compromise”.⁶⁷ On the one hand, their church and fellow Christians may consider rituals and beliefs associated with chieftaincy to be idolatrous or “against the law of God”.⁶⁸ On the other, refusing positions of traditional office can lead to social punishments, including being scorned by elders or having to leave the area.⁶⁹ Those who accept a traditional position but refuse to perform certain essential rituals may be destooled, as happened to one chief after he said in a radio interview that he “no longer believed in the sacred rituals of the stool room” and would not “pour libation to the ancestors” because he thought it was “demonic”.⁷⁰

Despite these difficulties, some elders have managed to balance Christian faith with traditional roles. The BBC report cited above provided two such instances – a Catholic

⁶³ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, “Ghana: Consequences of refusing to assume an inherited position of tribal or clan chief; state protection available to the individual (2004 – 2006)”, 11 October, http://www2.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450515 - Accessed 23 July 2009 – Attachment 32.

⁶⁴ “Resort to alternative dispute resolution - Justice Akuffo” 2004, GhanaWeb.com, 24 June, source: Ghana News Agency, <http://ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/#!/rumor/artikel.php?ID=60408> - Accessed 12 May 2010 – Attachment 34; Kotey, N 1999, “Ghana: The Black People’s Perception of White People”, *The Independent*, 23 February, <http://allafrica.com/stories/199902230232.html> – Accessed 12 May 2010 – Attachment 35.

⁶⁵ Wellings, N 2006, “Between custom and Christianity” *BBC News*, 4 August, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5239902.stm> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 36; see also, Bartle, P 2010, “Reply to: Request for information on the stool of the Kontihene amongst the Brong/Bono people of Brong Ahafo Region”, 6 May – Attachment 6.

⁶⁶ “Chief appeals to Electoral College to give him the nod” 2009, *Ghana News Agency*, 29 January, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/200656/1/chief-appeals-to-electoral-college-to-give-him-the.html> - Accessed 30 April 2010 – Attachment 15.

⁶⁷ Wellings, N 2006, “Between custom and Christianity” *BBC News*, 4 August, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5239902.stm> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 36.

⁶⁸ Ubink, J 2008, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts and the Role of the State in Peri-urban Ghana*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p 156 – Attachment 23; Wellings, N 2006, “Between custom and Christianity” *BBC News*, 4 August, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5239902.stm> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 36.

⁶⁹ Wellings, N 2006, “Between custom and Christianity” *BBC News*, 4 August, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5239902.stm> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 36.

⁷⁰ Ubink, J 2008, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts and the Role of the State in Peri-urban Ghana*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p 156 – Attachment 23.

queen mother and a Methodist chief – and noted a meeting of Christian chiefs and queen mothers in which they “encouraged one another to live out the Christian way of life within their traditional roles and settings”.⁷¹

5. Please provide information on the refusal of police or authorities to become involved in these kinds of tribal matters.

Sources are limited on the availability of state protection for those who refuse positions of traditional office, and differ in their assessments. The UK Home Office and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) have indicated that Ghana provides sufficient state protection for people who refuse a position of traditional office. The UK Home Office’s 2009 “Guidance Note” states that:

the availability of adequate state protection and a viable internal relocation alternative means that those within a particular community who are unwilling to succeed [a traditional role] are unlikely to encounter mistreatment.⁷²

In 2001, DFAT advised regarding another Akan applicant who feared he would be killed on returning to his hometown that Ghana “offers state protection if there is a need”.⁷³ However, an academic expert on Ghanaian political and cultural issues told the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) in relation to a Christian member of the Brong people who refused to become a traditional priest that it was “unlikely that state protection would extend to matters pertaining to traditional religious issues in families, communities and/or villages”.⁷⁴

No additional information was found regarding police responsiveness to scenarios of tribal disputes, but a survey of available sources suggests that Ghanaian police face constraints in responding to chieftaincy-related conflicts.

Ghanaian police

The Ghanaian police face impediments to enforcing the rule of law, including in relation to traditional disputes. Public trust is lacking; the police have a reputation for “brutality, corruption and negligence” and are widely perceived to be inept.⁷⁵ The force also suffers from inadequate resources and a lack of capacity. The US State Department has noted that there is insufficient office accommodation, vehicles and equipment outside of Accra.⁷⁶ A *Ghanaweb.com* editorial described the police as “overloaded” and a story in the *Chronicle* reported that a police commander in the Northern Region had said that the number of police in the area was “not in anyway commensurate [with] the demand for protection, or peacekeeping”. “[L]imited means of transport” also interfered with officers’ ability to provide “swift responses to conflict situations”, he said.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Wellings, N 2006, “Between custom and Christianity” *BBC News*, 4 August, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5239902.stm> - Accessed 3 May 2010 – Attachment 36.

⁷² UK Home Office 2009, “Operational Guidance Note: Ghana”, 28 January, see p 7 – Attachment 33.

⁷³ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2001, “Country Information Report 261/01: Availability of state protection in Ghana”, 23 September – Attachment 37.

⁷⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, “Ghana: Possible reprisals against a Christian member of the Brong tribe, who refuses to accept the matrilineal inheritance of the position of the high priest of the Firi Shrine in the Brong Ahafo region of Kumasi in the Ashanti region”, 22 January, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=country&docid=3df4be3518&skip=0&category=COI&publisher=IRBC&coi=GHA&querysi=brong&searchin=title&display=10&sort=date> - Accessed 5 May 2010 – Attachment 7.

⁷⁵ US State Department 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report – Ghana*, 11 March, sec 1.d – Attachment 38

⁷⁶ US State Department 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report – Ghana*, 11 March, sec 1.d – Attachment 38.

⁷⁷ Akosah-Sarpong, K 2010, “Understanding the overloaded police service”, *GhanaWeb.com*, 19 April, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=180398> – Accessed 11 May 2010 –

Traditional disputes pose special challenges. A *Ghanaweb.com* editorial said police were caught in a “schism between tradition and modernity” as they attempted to balance respect for indigenous ways with “modern rule of law, freedom and human rights”.⁷⁸ While the power and influence “of traditional rulers has steadily eroded” due in part to a “commensurate increase in the power of civil institutions”, chieftaincy remains a respected institution in Ghana and the law reserves a space for the authority of elders.⁷⁹ The US State Department states:

The Chieftaincy Act gives village and other traditional chiefs the power to mediate local matters and enforce customary tribal laws dealing with such matters as divorce, child custody, and property disputes.⁸⁰

According to an *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)* news story, the “Ghanaian constitution holds that the government cannot interfere in chieftaincy matters”.⁸¹ The extent to which this applies is not clear.

Police responsiveness

Reports indicate that authorities have responded to traditional disputes that have escalated into violence. In late 2009, for example, police arrested 24 people in the Eastern Region after an “exchange of gunfire” between rival parties in a chieftaincy dispute.⁸² Three people sustained gunshot wounds, but the *Ghanaian Chronicle* reported that the situation would have been worse “[b]ut for the timely intervention of personnel drawn from the Akuse and Greater Accra Police Commands”.⁸³ The US State Department also reported on chieftaincy disputes in which police acted, however questionably, to quell violence. For example:

- In response to an ongoing chieftaincy dispute in the Upper East Region that had claimed 18 lives, “military and police were deployed” and a curfew imposed to aid a return to order.
- Police arrested more than 75 people including children in connection with a chieftaincy conflict in the Volta Region. Media and NGO sources reported that police had used excessive force in attempting to control the violence and “extract information” from suspects.

Attachment 39; Gyebi, E 2010, “Ghana: Police Boss Scolds Chiefs for Fuelling Violence”, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 26 March, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201003260932.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 40.

⁷⁸ Akosah-Sarpong, K 2010, “Understanding the overloaded police service”, GhanaWeb.com, 19 April, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/artikel.php?ID=180398> – Accessed 11 May 2010 – Attachment 39.

⁷⁹ Ubink, J 2008, *In the Land of the Chiefs: Customary Law, Land Conflicts and the Role of the State in Peri-urban Ghana*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p 157 – Attachment 23; US State Department 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report – Ghana*, 11 March, sec 1.e – Attachment 38; “Ghana: Tension high as fifth person dies in chieftaincy violence” 2007, *IRIN: Humanitarian News and Analysis*, 6 November, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200711061112.html> – Accessed 12 May 2010 – Attachment 41.

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⁸¹ “Ghana: Tension high as fifth person dies in chieftaincy violence” 2007, *IRIN: Humanitarian News and Analysis*, 6 November, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200711061112.html> – Accessed 12 May 2010 – Attachment 41.

⁸² Akwetey, I 2009, “Ghana: Bloody clash over Odumase chieftaincy dispute”, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 23 November, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200911240630.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 42.

⁸³ Akwetey, I 2009, “Ghana: Bloody clash over Odumase chieftaincy dispute”, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 23 November, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200911240630.html> - Accessed 13 May 2010 – Attachment 42.

- Police arrested and charged “[a] number of individuals” in relation to a chieftaincy dispute in the Western Region that left three people dead.⁸⁴

These incidents were large-scale, involving multiple deaths. While it is possible that authorities’ responses to smaller-scale events went unreported, police acted wrongly in at least one such case. In 2010 the US State Department reported that police had refused to accept a complaint by a woman who was beaten by a Paramount Chief in the Brong Ahafo Region for not kneeling before him.⁸⁵ Instead, police detained the victim and her mother without charge.⁸⁶ In addition, the 2006 *Ghanaian Chronicle* article on traditionalists’ attempts to forcibly enstool a chief in Greater Accra Region made no mention of a police response.⁸⁷

6. Please provide information about the type of Christianity practised in this region.

There is very little available information on the type of Christianity practiced in the Brong Ahafo Region. Christianity is the majority religion: nearly 71 per cent of residents identify as Christians. A page on *ModernGhana.com* states that Catholics are the largest Christian group in Brong Ahafo Region, making up nearly 23 per cent of the Christian population. The next-largest Christian subgroup is Pentecostals (approximately 21 per cent) and Protestants (17 per cent).⁸⁸

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⁸⁴ US State Department 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report – Ghana*, 25 February, sec 1.a – Attachment 43.

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