ACROSS TRADITIONS AND MODERNITY
THE ASANTE WOMAN'S ACCESS TO LAND

by
Kwabena Obeng Asiama
Seth Opuni Asiama

LANDac Annual International Conference 2018
Utrecht, 28-29 June, 2018
SETTING THE SCENE

- Neglect for certain important parts of the customary system.
- The push to change one aspect of the system.
- Individual vs communal interest
THE CASE OF THE ASANTE WOMAN

- The Status of the Asante Woman
- Land Tenure in Asante
- The Effect of Modernisation
- Land Acquisition in Ghana
- Implication of Tenure System for Women
THE STATUS OF THE ASANTE WOMAN

- Political
- The Asante Woman
- Family
- Society
THE STATUS OF THE ASANTE WOMAN
POLITICAL SYSTEM

Chief Advisor

Authoritative on history and lineage

QUEEN MOTHER

Background Role
THE STATUS OF THE ASANTE WOMAN
FAMILY AND INHERITANCE

The basic unit of the society

- M (Male)
- F (Female)

Diagram shows the family and inheritance structure with arrows indicating relationships.
THE STATUS OF THE ASANTE WOMAN
FAMILY AND INHERITANCE

- Individual property reverts to the family
- Managed by the family head (male or female)
- Everyone has equal access, but gender roles may play a role
- Marital status is of little importance, children are rather paramount
THE STATUS OF THE ASANTE WOMAN
THE SOCIETY

- A complete person
- Economic independence from her husband (Her property remains hers)
- Further support from her uterine family
- Neither a man’s society nor a woman’s society
LAND TENURE IN ASANTE

- Land as a spiritual entity (A supernatural female spirit)
- Communally owned to uphold the honour of ancestors
- Promote the prosperity of the kingroup
- Ensure the security of future generations
THE EFFECT OF MODERNISATION

- Land as an economic asset
- Conjugal vs. uterine families
- Weakening of kingship ties
- Less support from uterine family
LAND ACQUISITION IN ASANTE

- **Statutory**
  - Application to the government
  - One per family

- **Customary**
  - Through chiefs
  - Payment of drink money
IMPLICATION OF LAND TENURE SYSTEM FOR WOMEN

- A clear land access route (customary and statutory)
- The influence of group vs. individual roles and interests
- Little kinship protection
- Diminishing women’s customary status resulting from colonialism and European acculturation
- Land acquisition – from kinship ties to economic muscle
- Subtle discrimination of laws against women
- Economic disability
FUTURE TRENDS

- Protective laws (protection from what?)
- More and more educated and commercially minded women
- Secondary education rate of women – 42% (2007) to 52% (2017)
- Uterine families more involved in the land market
CONCLUSION

- Unfettered by institutional structures
- Advantage in the customary social, cultural and political structures
- Free to take part in land market
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Address her economic disabilities not the land tenure system
- Preserve the land tenure system
- Enable her to progress within her perception of her socio-political circumstances.
UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

MANY THANKS