A Systematic Review of Queen Mother's Roles in Sub-Saharan Africa regarding Women and Children's Health and Education

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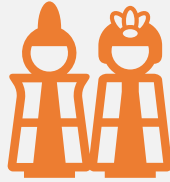arles Acolatse, JD MSW PhD Student UNTHSC

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Key Definitions

Queen Mother is defined as a traditional female leader who partners with their chiefs to address whole community social issues, especially on women and children's issues (Steegstra, 2009).

Traditional local governance is defined as the authority of a chief or queen mother, by virtue of his or her ancestry, to rule or govern over people over an area.
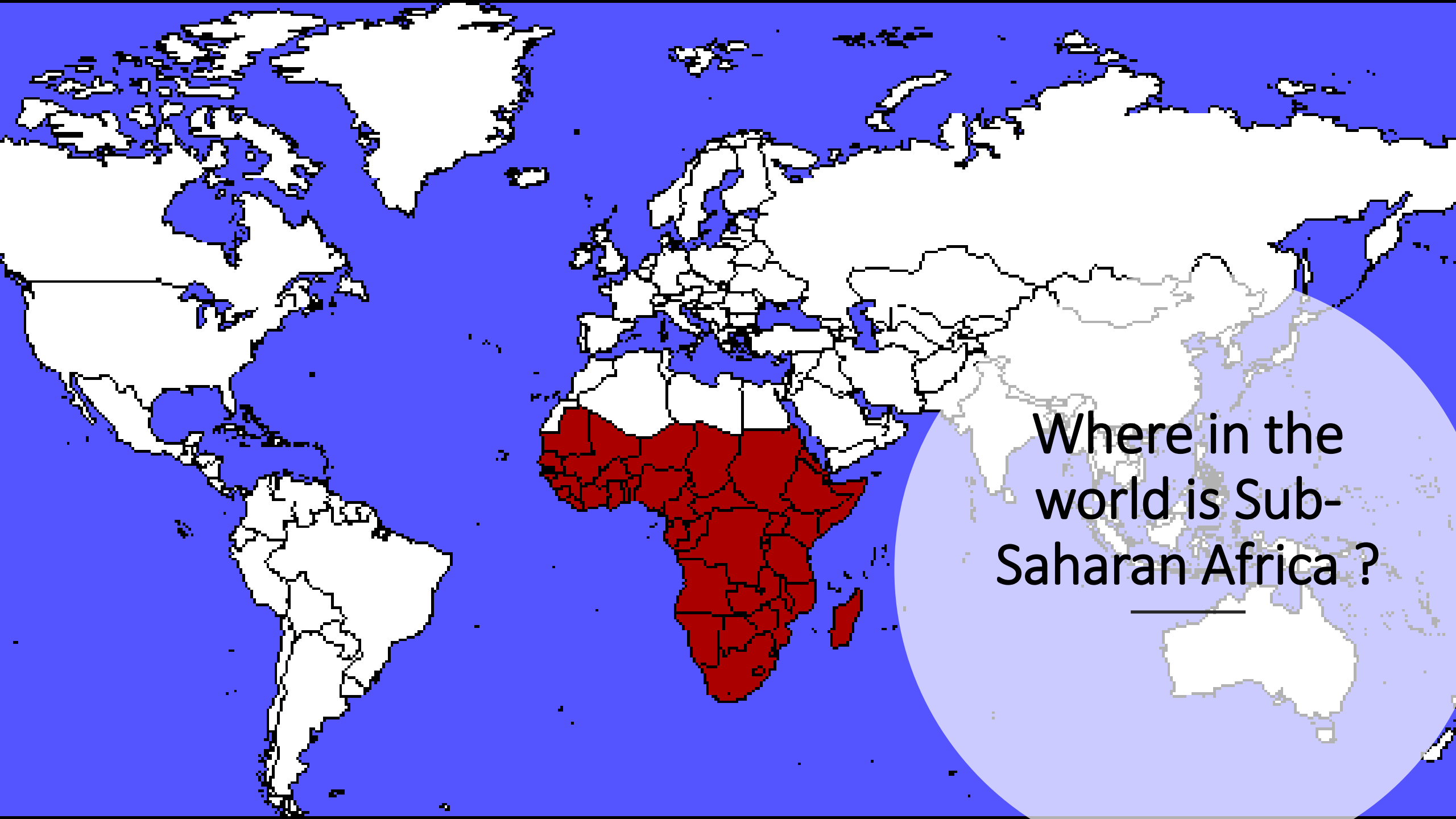
Where in the world is Sub-Saharan Africa ?

The burden of women and children's health and education

Low achievement of MDGs/SDGs for Health & Education

Disease prevalence – HIV

Insufficient schools & poorly resourced in rural areas

Weak infrastructure and policies

Orphans and vulnerable groups

Research question: How the Queen Mothers or their counterparts in traditional local governance contributed to the health and education of women and children in Sub-Saharan Africa

Search & Selection Strategy

- 2 Reviewers

- 5 databases (PubMed, Web of Science, Academic Source Complete, JSTOR, Google Scholar)

- End Note

- Data abstracted to Excel

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

A Systematic Review of Queen Mother's Roles in Sub-Saharan Africa regarding Women and Children's Health and Education Flow Chart

Identification

Articles Identified Through Database Searching

(PubMed, Web of Science, Academic Search Complete (EBSCO), Google Scholar, JSTOR)

N = 22, 150

Additional Article Identified Through Other Sources and Manual Search

N = NA

Screening

Article Retrieved After Duplicates Removed

N= 22, 147

Eligibility

Abstracts/Articles assessed For Eligibility

N = 22, 147

Abstracts/ Articles Excluded For Reason: Not Meeting Study Criteria

N = 22, 108

Included

Abstracts/Articles Meeting Study Criteria and Included in Study

N = 39

Country location

West Africa - Ghana – North , Eastern, South, Nigeria (Kingdom of Benin) & Dahomey,

East Africa – Uganda (Buganda), Swahili Coast , Mozambique, Zanzibar , Namibia & Swaziland

Southern Africa – South Africa and Angola

Period of Study

PRE-COLONIAL - 8   POST COLONIAL - 9   BOTH – 18   UNSURE – 4
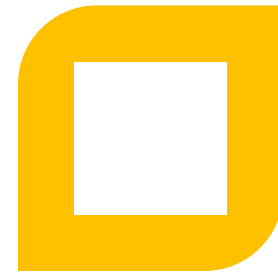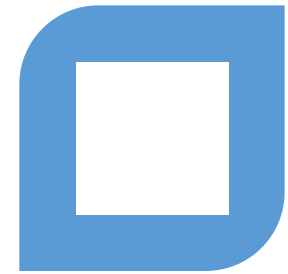
Terms for Queen Mother

Queen Mother	Old Lady	Chieftainness	Ohemaa	Mwana
Queen	Majira	Kpojito	Obea panin	Majira
	Nkosuohemaa	Market Queen		

Selection of Queen Mother

Most women acquired the position of queen mother by virtue of heredity or marriage into a royal family. A queen mother could be the biological parent of a king (although this appears to have been infrequent); a classificatory mother, sister, daughter, or other relative; an in-law; an appointee; an influential member of the community; the wife or sister of a former ruler; or even an outsider (Barnes, 1997).

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Political Authority/Responsibility

- Queen Mothers or counterparts documented in West, East, and South Africa.

- Authority: Pre-colonial -Tradition, Post-colonial - Constitutions, Laws

- Structure: Kingdoms - Kings, Council of Chiefs

  Villages - Chiefs, Councils, Queen Mothers (Advisor)

- Responsibilities of Queen Mothers:
  - ✓ Selection of Chiefs - "Obaa na owoo ohene" (It is the woman who gives birth to a chief)
  - ✓ Advise Chiefs
  - ✓ Arbitrate Conflicts Among Women
  - ✓ Women and Children Health and Education

Health

HIV /AIDS

prevention strategies

Care of Orphans

Sexual and reproductive

- Puberty rites
- Family Planning

Education

Set up schools

Fundraising for schools

Women and Children's Social Welfare

- Adjudicate cases e.g. child delinquency, family disputes
- Founded organization for poverty reduction and capacity-building
- Liaise with social workers to solve community problems
- Caregiving to Orphans e.g. Family Net System Strategy

DISCUSSION

Discussion

Evidence of Queen Mothers or Counterparts in 9 West, East, and Southern African countries.

Evidence of Queen Mother position from pre-colonial period to today.

Currently the Chieftaincy (which includes Queen Mothers) is codified in some countries' constitutions and laws.

Queen Mothers are responsible for women and children, particularly for health and education.

Discussion
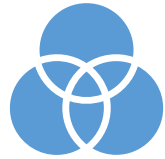
Queen Mothers position incorporates Ostrom's Design Principles including:

Defined Boundaries

Adaptation to Local Conditions

Institutions for Collective Choice

Behavior/Outcomes Monitoring

Arena for Conflict Resolution

Right to Local Self-Governance

Nested Institutions (i.e. Council of Chiefs)

Conclusion

Evidence of Queen Mother throughout Sub-Saharan Africa

Multiple countries have a legal basis under current law for Queen Mothers & governments actively reviving role

Legitimacy and recognition of Queen Mother by the communities

Several active programs

- Health i.e. HIV
- Education e.g. school building

Conclusion

New types of Queen Mother such as Development Mothers

Convenor and liaison with international NGOs

Need for formal recognition of Queen Mothers

Roles of Queen Mothers exceed resources (Opportunities)

Next Steps

Search additional databases & Follow the references

Fill in Blanks

Interrater reliability for reviewers

Deep dive into thematic areas

Final publication Dec 2019 (Journal?)

Call to Action

NGO

Journal

Reminder….

Queen Mothers in the community

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