THE IMPLICATIONS OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN GOVERNANCE FOR DECENTRALISATION IN GHANA

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INTRODUCTION
Recent titles such as ‘Tradition as a Modern Strategy’, ‘Modern Dilemmas and Traditional Insights’, ‘The Indigenisation of Modernity’, and so on reflect the growing prominence accorded to culture and tradition in current development thinking and research (Nwaka 2004). The renewed interest in indigenous knowledge and institutions is in line with the current advocacy of the minimalist state and the ‘enabling approach’ as conditions for good governance in a period of structural adjustment and public sector reform. Under the pressure of civil society and the donor agencies, governments are urged to, and in fact obliged to reduce their role to what their dwindling or limited resources and capacities permit (Opoku-Mensah 2004). This implies decentralising the structure of governance, promoting genuine participation, and enlisting the broad participation of non-state actors and stakeholders (including traditional institutions and leadership).

Even though Ghanaians pledge allegiance to one republic, one government with one Constitution, there is in fact a dual governance system in Ghana with dual power and authority (Antwi-Barfi 2003). The traditional governance system represented by the chieftaincy institution and leadership, and the modern governance system (characterised sometimes as civil, formal or central) co-exist with one another. The chieftaincy system has its own rules and customs within traditional domains that more often than not differ from the modern system. However, the compatibility of rules and customs in terms of the governance of the two systems is paramount to a society seeking to accelerate its socio-economic development and the establishment of good governance. The problems of poverty, neglect and exclusion are most pronounced at the local community level, in the villages and urban slums, where these communities ought to be encouraged to participate and mobilise all available resources and energies in order to bring their own agendas to bear on governance and development. Yet, in the context of Ghana, it is at the local level that the contact or link between traditional and modern authority is at a minimum.

According to Osei-Tutu (2005), the terms ‘tradition’ and ‘modern’ have been used generally to express an apparent difference or, in extreme usages, disjuncture between pre-colonial institutions on one hand and colonial and post-colonial institutions on the other. For instance, references to the relationship in the literature on Ghana have paired traditional with ‘state’, ‘area’, ‘institutions’, ‘ruler’, or ‘society’, etc to
Yankson (2004) defined governance broadly to include among other things effective and efficient use of power and resources, promotion of justice and equity, participatory democracy, and transparency and accountability (political, managerial and financial) responsibilities. The assumption is that effective local and national development is best realised when local and national political and administrative leaders recognise and apply these elements in development. Adding modern or traditional (as defined above) to governance refer to the application of these elements in modern or traditional setting respectively.

This article looks at the duality of governance (traditional and modern) in Ghana and its implications for the country’s decentralisation programme. After this brief introduction, the article looks at the current traditional and modern governance systems in Ghana, followed by a discussion of the relationship between the two systems. It then looks at the implications of the two systems of governance for Ghana’s decentralisation programme. The article concludes by making the case for institutional reconciliation involving the traditional and modern governance systems with the aim of enhancing Ghana’s socio-economic development and local development through the decentralisation programme in particular.

**TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM**

Traditional governance embodied by the chieftaincy institution predates the emergence of the modern state of Ghana. The institution of chieftaincy has always had important cultural, political, economic and social significance in Ghana (Yankson 2000; Boafo-Arthur 2001). It must, however, be admitted that the traditionally unfettered powers of chiefs have undergone transformation as a result of colonial rule and the attempts by some post-colonial governments to influence the role of chiefs in political affairs. Consequently the overall powers and authority of chiefs have experience ebbs and flows depending on regime preferences and the dynamic changes in the chieftaincy institution itself.

Before colonial intervention in Ghana, there existed a form of local government founded upon ethnocentric native states, and operated through the indigenous institution of chieftaincy. Therefore, the present day Ghana then had no single central unifying government but rather a host of authorities of vary
autonomy headed by chiefs in the native states. These indigenous authorities perform judicial, administrative (especially the maintenance of law and order) and the provision of services within their areas of authority which were relatively localised or limited in geographical extent (Yankson 2000: 160). The pre-colonial diffused pattern of administration remained essentially the same during British colonial rule (mid-19th century to mid-20th century). According to Gough and Yankson (2000), the colonial administration was based on the principle of *Indirect Rule* through the chiefs, and of non-interference in native affairs. Indirect Rule was a policy aimed at providing statutory basis for the exercise of local government functions by chiefs and at effecting measures of reform to suit the existing conditions (Ayee and Tay 1998). However, Osei-Tutu (2005), notes that even though the British colonial masters defined Indirect Rule as ‘governing in local affairs through the customary institutions of the people of the area’ with the aim of enhancing local administration, the practical application of the policy entails a disturbance of the existing traditional political order. This is because among other factors the principle failed to take into account customary governance and the customary processes of acquiring power and authority. In addition, an insistence in the policy that the appointment and impeachment of traditional leaders be subjected to colonial government approval meant that the colonial state was attempting to appropriate the people’s power over these issues.

Since the 1940s, successive central governments have sought to discard the chiefly principle in local government, then to weaken chieftaincy by attrition and eventually altering the legal and constitutional basis of chieftaincy. First, it was the passage of the Native Authority Ordinance (1944), which is described as a watershed for it marked the beginning of the erosion of the power of chiefs in local administration, and a continuation of the process of change from chieftaincy-based local government towards democratically-elected government (Yankson 2000; Boafo-Arthur 2001). Even though there have been attempts both legally and constitutionally in the post-colonial period to carve a place for chieftaincy in local and national administration, the fact still remains that the institution is weaker today than it was in past time (Rathbone 2000; Arhin 2002). Yet, chieftaincy in Ghana has never been under the threat of extinction under the modern state (Arhin 2002). However, some national governments have under certain circumstances related to chiefs differently, involving either building ‘partnership’ with or exploiting the authority of traditional authorities. In both cases, the process involved a reconfiguration of authority, and in general terms, the subordination of traditional authority to the modern state.
The traditional governance system, which pre-dates the emergence of the modern state of Ghana as earlier noted, is illustrated in Fig. 1. The basis of the governance system is the family. In each lineage or family group is a political unit with a headman who represents the lineage at the Village Council (Osei-Tutu 1994, 2000). Through this, a system of hierarchy is developed in the following ascending order: Family/head; Village Headman/Village Council (govern a village or a settlement); Divisional Chiefs (responsible for a group of settlements, and responsible for the village head/other sub-divisional chiefs); Paramount Chief (political head of a traditional area or state). It needs to be noted that the modern state of Ghana is composed of a collection of semi-autonomous polities recognised officially as ‘Traditional Areas’. Traditional Areas are often defined in ethno-linguistic terms as communities composed of people with primordial characteristics like common ancestry, origins, history, language and culture. However, a closer observation of these entities indicate that they are in fact multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic suggesting that the inhabitants are united under circumstances other than common ancestry and language alone. In all, there are 193 officially recognised Traditional Areas in Ghana (Osei-Tutu 2005). With defined boundaries and a system of local government run by traditional authorities in accordance with traditions and customs, these Traditional Areas constitute the primary constituency of chieftaincy in Ghana. I will come back to the issue of Traditional Areas and its implications for district planning and decentralisation in the course of the discussions.
The next in the hierarchy is the Regional House of Chiefs. This is basically a council of all the paramount chiefs in a region. Since there are 10 political-administrative regions in Ghana, there are 10 Regional Houses of Chiefs as well. The main functions of the Regional House of Chiefs are to deal with chieftaincy disputes and other matters relating to the chieftaincy institution in a region. It also serves as the forum where central government agencies and leaders liaise with traditional authorities in a region.

The National House of Chiefs which is composed of paramount chiefs selected from the Regional Houses of Chiefs is at the top of the traditional governance system. The law establishing the National House of Chiefs, The Chieftaincy Act (Act 370) of 1971 states that:

> The National House of Chiefs shall have appellate jurisdiction in any matter relating to chieftaincy which has been determined by the House of Chiefs in a region from which appellate jurisdiction there shall be an appeal with the leave of the Supreme Court or the National House of Chiefs to the Supreme Court (Chieftaincy Act, Act 370, Clause 22 (1)).

According to Boafo-Arthur (2001), the Chieftaincy Act of 1971 was a revolutionary step since it recognises the essence of chiefs in judicial matters affecting chieftaincy. This was not in tune with earlier laws that did not even recognize the capabilities of chiefs to deal with matters affecting their own institution. Subsequent constitutional enactments such as the 1979 and 1992 constitutions safeguarded and guaranteed the existence of the chieftaincy institution as part and parcel of the state called Ghana (Bening 1999). The 1979 Constitution, Article 177 (1) emphatically states that ‘the institution of chieftaincy together with its traditional councils as established by customary law and usage is hereby guaranteed’. In pursuant of this goal, subsection 2 adds that, ‘Parliament shall have no power to enact any legislation: which confers on any person or authority the right to accord or withdrawn recognition to or from a chief; or which in any way detracts or derogates from the honour and dignity of the institution of chieftaincy (Bening 1999; Boafo-Arthur 2001).

These legal frameworks guaranteeing the continuous existence of the chieftaincy institution is further entrenched in the 1992 Constitution (Chapter 22). The 1992 Constitution mandates the National House of Chiefs among other responsibilities to advise on any matter relating to or affecting chieftaincy; undertake progressive study of customary laws with the view to evolve in appropriate cases a unified system of rules of customary laws, and compile customary lines of succession applicable to each stool or skin and;
undertake evaluation of traditional customs with the view of eliminating those that are outmoded and socially harmful. Implicit in these mandates is the fact that when they are pursue by the National and Regional Houses of Chiefs they will guarantee development and enhance democratic governance (Boafo-Arthur 2001). As a result, central government has established the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Chieftaincy Affairs and the Chieftaincy Secretariat to liase with the National and Regional Houses of Chiefs on matters pertaining to chieftaincy. These offices are also to advise and make policy recommendations on chieftaincy to the President and cabinet ministers (central government). What is, however, clear from Fig. 1 is the absence of any formal links between central government or local government and traditional authorities at the district level (or put simply Traditional Area level). Significantly, this is where the influence of chiefs is most felt both in terms of authority and territorial area of jurisdiction.

MODERN GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

The current modern governance system is centred on a decentralised political and administrative framework. The adoption of this bottom-up political and administrative approach was a departure from the past where the approach was centralised and top-down in character. Ghana embarked on decentralised administration and development planning in 1988, in order to encourage greater local autonomy and participation and to achieve greater efficiency (Ayee 1995, 1997, 2000; Crook and Manor 1998). This was given legal backing by PNDC Law 207, subsequently superseded by Chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution and later replaced by the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462). Within this legal framework, the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) was established under Act 479 and Act 480 as the apex organisation in the decentralised development planning system (Mohan 1998; Owusu 2004, 2005). The framework also determines the relationship between the NDPC and other planning and administrative bodies such as government ministries and agencies (NDPC 1996). The overall modern governance system centred on a decentralised development framework is illustrated in Fig. 2.

Ghana’s local government system is described as a *fused or mixed system* combining the prefectural-style rule of traditional district administration, responsible to central government, with the democratic control, service provision and tax-raising powers of devolved local government (Naustdalslid 1992; Crook and Manor 1998). Under the law, District Assemblies (local governments) have overall responsibility for the development of the districts. In other words, the formal politico-administration, socio-economic planning and development of districts in Ghana are the sole responsibility of District Assemblies. The Assemblies are required by law to have executive, legislative and deliberative powers, and administrative and
technical support, to articulate the views and aspirations of the people within districts for effective development at local level.

**Fig. 2: The Institutional Structures of Ghana’s Decentralised Planning and Administrative System**

The District Assembly is headed by a District Chief Executive (DCE), who is nominated and appointed by the national President with the approval of the Assembly. Two-thirds of the membership of the DA is determined by non-partisan local elections, and the other one-third by central government appointments. The central government appointments are carried out in consultation with interest groups (which may include chiefs) in the district. The members of the District Assembly are presumed to be people who represent the views and aspirations of local people and communities within the district (Owusu 2004, 2005).
Below the District Assemblies are the sub-district structures (Unit Committees and Area Councils), which are local organs of the Assembly with no independent powers. The Unit Committees are formed for populations of 500-1000 and 1500 in rural and urban areas respectively. On the other hand, Urban, Area, and Zonal Councils are formed for settlements with populations above 15000, 5000-15000 and 3000 respectively (MLG&RD 1996). The sub-district structures are essentially consultative bodies with no budgets of their own, and carry out functions as delegated by the Assembly (Naustdalslid 1992; Ayee 2000). Since the sub-district structures are very close to the people (in terms of level), their basic role of educating, organising and mobilising the people for development projects is very important. They also form the basis for problem identification and for the initiation and implementation of self-help projects at the local level (Laryea-Adjei 1998). The basic aim of these structures is to take decentralisation to the grassroots level by involving local people in all decision-making processes (MLG&RD 1996).

To enhance the District Assembly’s administrative and technical capacity, they are supported by the District Planning Co-ordinating Unit (DPCU), which must consists of skilled professional staff. The DPCU is also the channel through which data, information, development policy frameworks and planning guidelines are exchanged between the district and the NDPC through the Regional Co-ordinating Council (RCC) and its technical body, the Regional Planning Co-ordinating Unit (RPCU). These regional bodies serve as intermediate co-ordinating and monitoring bodies between central government and the districts (Owusu 2004, 2005).

Under the decentralised planning and politico-administrative system, development starts with the communities and their representatives (Assembly members), identifying their communities’ needs. These needs are subsequently harmonised at the district level by the District Assembly, and then forwarded to the regional level for further harmonisation with other district plans. Plans from all the regions and districts, together with sectoral plans from government’s ministries and agencies are harmonised and integrated into a national development plan by the NDPC, the apex of the development planning system. Under this approach, development planning starts at the community and district level, and finally ends there by way of implementation (Owusu 2004, 2005).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN GOVERNANCE IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

According to Boafo-Arthur (2001) and Arhin (2002), from a historical perspective there has been very little consistency in the roles carved for chiefs in local administration. Even though the 1957 Constitution
thought it fit to reserve one-third membership of local government units for chiefs, the penchant of the then ruling government, Convention People’s Party (CPP) to enhance the trappings of party power and party officials at various levels at the expense of chiefly authority, meant that in reality the seats reserved for chiefs were taken by CPP appointed members (Boafo-Arthur 2001; Rathnbone 2000). This situation eventually led to the banning of chiefs from local government through the *Local Government Act of 1961*. The Chieftaincy Act of 1971 and the 1969 Constitution reversed this trend by establishing not only the National House of Chiefs but also reserved one-third of the membership of District Councils for chiefs. Additionally, a provision was made for the inclusion of not more than two chiefs from the Regional House of Chiefs in the Regional Council. The 1979 Constitution ensured that membership of District Councils included one-third chosen from traditional authorities in the district, and not more than two chiefs from the Regional House of Chiefs were to be members of the Regional Councils (Boafo-Arthur 2001).

The Local Government Law (PNDCL 207) of 1988 (superseded by the Local Government Act, Act 462, 1993), however, restructured the composition of the local government (District Assembly) that came as part of the decentralisation process. Therefore, chiefs lost their one-third membership (Boafo-Arthur 2001) neither was any formal links or structures put in place to involve traditional authorities in district administration and planning. According to Boafo-Arthur (2001), the main reason was that the then military government, Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), which introduced the current decentralisation programme regarded the representation or active participation of chiefs in decentralised institutions, such as the District Assemblies or the organs of power, as undemocratic and counter-revolutionary. In short, the current decentralisation programme did not make any provision for the automatic inclusion of chiefs in the District Assembly as well as its sub-district structures. This does not, however, prevents the central government from appointing chiefs as District Assembly members on the strength of the power of the central government to appoint one-third of District Assembly members. However, it needs to be stressed that under the current Local Government laws, chiefs who are elected or appointed, and serve in the District Assembly do not represent the institution of chieftaincy per se but are in the Assembly to perform various roles like any other members of the Assembly (Yankson 2000).

The legal frameworks establishing the sub-district structures of the District Assembly, such as the Urban, Zonal, Town Councils and Unit Committees also did not make any provision for the automatic inclusion of chiefs in these structures. Even though District Chief Executives are enjoined to consult the chiefs in their districts in the appointment of persons as members of the sub-district structures, it needs to be
stressed that the groups to be consulted is broadened to include the Presiding Member of the District Assembly and organized productive economic groupings in the urban area, zone, town or unit. The point emphasised here is that, traditional authorities and their views are dispensable according to the dictates of the legal frameworks establishing the District Assemblies. Yet, in Ghana, chiefs are generally accepted as central to the Ghanaian society and they continued to assist in the mobilisation of their communities because they continued to have relevance for the people.

LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL SYNERGY: IMPLICATIONS FOR DECENTRALISATION

The lack of or inadequate integration of the two systems of governance, or what Antwi-Barfi (2003) described as the ‘Tale of two governments’ has several implications for the decentralisation programme and efforts to promote participatory democracy and rapid socio-economic development at the district level. This arrangement has created problems, which do not augur well for efficient local administration. This is because the lack of institutionalised representation of chiefs in the local government structure has resulted in strained relations between some chiefs and functionaries of the Assemblies and their sub-district structures. In some districts, the District Chief Executive and the chiefs are not in good terms while in other districts it is the chiefs and the Assemblyman or Unit Committee members who are at loggerheads (Ayee 2000, cited in Boafo-Arthur 2001).

The absence of chiefs in the working of the District Assemblies has meant that a potent force with regarding to the mobilisation of the community at the local level is lacking. Even though some researchers have general described the relationship between Assembly members and the chiefs in their electoral areas as cordial, other researchers such as Ayee’s work cited in Boafo-Arthur (2001) indicate that this cordial relationship may not exist in all communities and districts. Peace and harmony are very important elements in the promotion of decentralised development as well mobilising all the people in a district for development.

Again, how can District Assemblies engage in any meaningful comprehensive planning such as land usage and zoning ordinance when the bulk of the land resources in Ghana are in the hands of traditional authorities? Traditional authorities in Ghana are a force to reckon with due to the fact that they hold about 80% of the total land resources in the country (Osei-Tutu 2005). As Gough and Yankson (2000) note, in practical terms, the main lever of power which traditional authority possess is that of land allocation, a process exercised through a network of local chiefs. With the exception of lands classified as state lands, all lands in Ghana are held in trust for the people by their chiefs (Devas and Korboe 2000). Many analysts
believed that among other factors, the current increase in land disputes and haphazard land zoning and development in many parts of the country, especially in the large urban centres is the result of lack of integration of the traditional and modern government structures.

Further, the two forms of governance systems imply that in many districts in Ghana there are in fact two officially recognised different forms of political and administrative, and territorial boundaries. While past criteria for the demarcation of district and regional boundaries by the central government included the need for ethnic groups to be placed in one district or region (Dickson 1971, 1975; Bening 1999), the small size of some ethnic groups and the fragmentation of others meant they had to coexist with other groups (Owusu 2005). Each ethnic group, however, maintains its autonomy, traditional structure and area of jurisdiction within the districts. In other instances, in many districts, the Traditional Areas based on ethnocentric boundaries do not coincide with the present day formal politico-administrative boundaries. Either of these instances may fragment a district, especially in cases where traditional boundaries are contested, resulting in land and chieftaincy disputes. This may have the effect of retarding community and district development due to the lack of order and harmony as well as impeding the flow of people, goods and information, and other interactions within the district (Owusu 2005).

An illustration of my own study of the Upper Denkyira District (UDD) and Twifo Hemang Lower Denkyira District (THLDD) of the Central Region will make the above point clearer. In the Upper Denkyira District (UDD), due to past inter-tribal and ethnic wars, and movements of people, the Traditional Area, namely Denkyira, is not only confined to the UDD, but part can also be located in the THLDD around the town of Jukwa. In fact, while Dunkwa is formally and officially recognised as the modern capital of the Denkyiras, the Denkyiras view Jukwa as their traditional capital and the seat of the Traditional Area, though these two areas are not contiguous entities. In the case of the THLDD, the presence of four indigenous Akan ethnic groups (Twifo, Mokwaa, Hemang, and Denkyira), within the district implies the existence of 4 Traditional Areas in the district. The competing claims of these paramountcies or Traditional Areas, and land disputes have resulted in numerous chieftaincy conflicts in the district. Interviews with some key informants in the Twifo Hemang Lower Denkyira District Assembly (THLDDA) indicated that the existence of these competing paramountcies have contributed to the underdevelopment of the district through the waste of scarce resources on land litigation and the lack of adequate social harmony in some parts of the district (Owusu 2005).
What the above example illustrates is that within districts there are cases of competing centres of power – traditional and modern. This may have negative impact on the decentralisation programme especially regarding the use of district capitals (modern centres) to spearhead district development. In such instances, rural-urban linkages (involving the district capital and the rest of the district) may be weaker as each centre pursues its own development agenda. This is because while formal planning may recognise district capitals as the focal point for development, traditional authority could dictate otherwise (Owusu 2005). The recent public outcry in some parts of the country on proposals by central government to create new districts and district capitals gives credence to this fact. In many instances, the outcry is not against the creation of the new districts, but the selection or choice of a settlement as a district capital. In a comment on this situation, Ghana’s Vice President, Aliu Mahama, advised communities within newly proposed districts to collectively decide on the selection and choice of district capitals, and to use the due process of law to pursue their proposal where there are differences. He added that the situation where every town and village is demanding to be the district capital is detrimental to socio-economic development and peace (General News, www.ghanaweb.com, Accessed on June 8, 2004). The question is how can these issues be resolved when the ‘custodians’ or ‘owners’ of the competing centres are not involved in any meaningful discussions or consulted on these matters. Again, the conflicts and agitations resulting from the proposal to create new districts and district capitals raise questions regarding the extent to which local communities and local people (including chiefs) are involved in decision-making at the district or community level as envisaged under the decentralisation programme.

THE CASE FOR INSTITUTIONAL SYNERGY IN DECENTRALISED GOVERNANCE IN GHANA

In making the case for the incorporation of traditional governance into modern governance, the real challenge is not to romanticize traditional government or over-idealize modern government as both have their strengths and limitations, and should complement and not confront or undermine each other (Nwaka 2004). This point reaffirms views expressed by two of the prominent traditional rulers in Africa – Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, King of the Ashanti people of Ghana, and Kgosi Leruo T. Molotlegi, King of the Royal Bafokeng Kingdom of South Africa at a conference titled ‘Governance for a Progressing Africa, October 11-15, 2004, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. They noted that traditional rulers are not contesting power with the modern state, but would like to work in partnership with it, arguing that it was the modern African state that in many case had refused to partner with traditional leadership (African Development Forum 2004).
The above limitations of Ghana’s decentralisation programme suggest the need for what Nwaka (2004) and Dia (1996) have described as ‘institutional reconciliation’ between state and community through measures that increase the technical and organisational capacity of community institutions, and also create a more responsive and accountable public sector. Therefore, there are sound reasons for integrating traditional and modern systems of governance as a means of enhancing community and district development. This approach would strengthen rather than weaken the decentralisation programme. Some of the arguments for integrating the two governance systems are as follows:

Most chiefs in Ghana today are development-oriented, and hence are very active in mobilising their people to initiate and implement self-help projects as well facilitate the implementation of projects from the District Assemblies. This present orientation of chiefs is captured in this comments from the Chief of the Ho-Asogli Traditional area of the Volta Region: ‘Our predecessors led our ancestors to war with the objective of territorial security but today we are faced with new kinds of exigency – the need to wage a relentless battle against poverty, ignorance and disease, which must be fought in unity’ (Osei-Tutu 2005). Like the District Assemblies, some traditional rulers have embarked on investment tours by mobilising both internal and external sources of funding (such as from the World Bank, and international NGOs) – all with the aim of improving the well being of their subjects. In other words, as Yankson (2000) noted both the District Assemblies and the chieftaincy institution have common objectives – the development of communities and districts.

A second point to note is the question of legitimacy. In a well-crafted argument, Ray (1997) notes that the political legitimacy of traditional leadership should be added to that of local government in order to expand the capabilities of local government’s efforts in promoting development and good governance. Legitimacy defined as the reasons why people obey authority is an important mechanism for the state to obtain compliance of its citizens (or subjects) with the laws (or other wishes) of the state (Ray 1997). According to Ray (1997), traditional leaders and the modern state have different forms of legitimacy. The legitimacy of traditional leaders is derived from historical and religious claims that are interpreted to mean the pre-colonial root of their authority as well its deep roots in indigenous culture. Traditional leaders are thus seen as the ‘fathers’ and ‘mothers’ of the people. They are therefore recognised in Ghanaian society as the transmitters of culture by the people, themselves and the state through official and unofficial constitutional enactments and laws. On the other hand, the post-colonial state legitimates its authority through the legal system as well as democracy (particularly where a government can claim to have ‘duly’ been elected by the people).
Ray (1997) notes that if legitimacy is not seen as a zero-sum, winner-take-all situation, then the different bases of legitimacy that the state and traditional leaders have need not be an obstacle to the achievement of development and democratisation by local and central governments. More importantly, he adds that where there is little co-operation, little co-ordination and little recognition of the differing bases of legitimacy between the local government of the state and the traditional leaders, local government itself will carry out its policies and projects as best it can, often without all of the desired or even necessary resources. However, if there is a strategy of adding the legitimacy resources that traditional leaders have to those of the state's local government, then it should be possible to mobilize more quickly the compliance, co-operation and other resources of those people who are both citizens of the state and subjects of the traditional leaders. The issue here is not whether people accept the legitimacy of local government but rather how the addition of legitimacy resources from traditional leaders may increase the compliance and enthusiasm of people, thereby increasing the capacity of local governments, District Assemblies, in promoting development through increased development programmes and resources. In short, if the main challenge of the District Assemblies is to increase their capacity to promote district development and democratisation, one strategy might be to increase people’s acceptance of the Assemblies’ structures and policies. A way to implement this strategy would be to add the legitimacy of traditional leadership to that of the District Assemblies. The desired outcome would be more development as people put more effort into the Assemblies. On the other hand, little or less cooperation with traditional leadership implies less development, as it is largely the case in many districts in Ghana today.

Furthermore, integrating traditional and modern governance especially at the district level would serve to give concrete meaning to the concept of partnership in Ghana’s current local government system. The concept of partnership lies at the heart of decentralisation and devolved development administration and planning. A process of district development which provides an active role for traditional leadership in development and service delivery, social change and transformation and governance, as well as with regard to its more well-known functions in areas of land and customary judicial functions is in tune with the basic principles of decentralisation and participatory development. In other words, development here is seen as a joint effort involving communities and their traditional leaders rather than as an imposition by the District Assemblies.

Moreover, recognising the value of traditional leadership and integrating it into the formal district administration under the decentralisation programme would serve to highlight and strengthen the
contributions of chiefs as a unifying force. This provides a basis for strengthening national identity and culture by allowing for the rich diversity of Ghanaian communities. In this sense, the collaboration between traditional leaders and District Assemblies would be such that it enhances social and cultural stability – critical conditions needed for both district and national development. It also offers opportunities for the active promotion of the welfare of women and children and other vulnerable groups within the community, and the elimination of all practices that are abhorrent and detrimental to the health and welfare of any member of the community. This desired conditions could then be harnessed for the education and welfare of present and future generations.

Lastly, a co-operation between traditional leaders and District Assemblies, and other local development agencies would enhance the potential for the effective delivery of development services to local communities. This is well highlighted by the present approach to get traditional leaders involved in the promotion of development-oriented programmes such as reforestation, education of the youth and health immunisation. This is in line with the present advocacy of bringing development planning closer to the felt needs and aspirations of the people. Development is therefore expected to be a ‘bottom-up’ rather than a ‘top-down’ exercise, and which would have the support of the local population. To ensure this, traditional leadership can mobilise local opinion in favour of, and participation in, development plans, programmes and projects for development (Sharma 1997). Community-based development centred on self-help can build on traditions of communal provision of services by mobilising local resources. Traditional leaders’ role in articulating this vision is well recognised in many communities in Ghana. The integration of traditional authorities into the District Assemblies will formalise this role. This also offers opportunities for building the capacity of traditional leaders both in terms of training and infrastructural assistance – in order to be able to work constructively with District Assemblies towards facilitating positive social change at the local and district levels.

**ADDITIONAL LEADERSHIP LEGITIMACY TO DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES: THE OPTIONS**

Ray (1997) provides several options, which could be pursued to get traditional authorities actively involved in formal local government administration. Some of these options can be operationalised and applied in the Ghanaian context in order to promote rapid socio-economic development of districts. The first set of options could aim at getting traditional leaders to work directly with the District Assemblies. Here, chiefs might be involved in the legislative or executive functions of the District Assemblies. This may require reserving seats for traditional leaders in the executive or other committees of the District
Assemblies. Appointment of chiefs to these reserved seats in the Assemblies could be undertaken on the basis of several mechanisms, such as central government or the District Assemblies appointing a specific proportion of traditional leaders within a district to occupy reserved seats within the Assembly. Such positions could also be filled by elections in traditional leadership forums such as the traditional councils, Regional Houses of chiefs, or the National House of chiefs. Another selection method could be to have the traditional leaders elected to the reserved seats during the regular local government elections. However, this option could create a backlash as it could undermine or compromise the neutrality of chiefs as the fathers and mothers of the community (Ray 1997). In other words, this could compromise their ability to work with all irrespective of political persuasion.

Alternatively, chiefs could be allocated seats for administrative and supervisory functions of the District Assemblies, as it is the case with bodies such as the Regional Coordinating Councils, Lands Commission, and other national statutory bodies or agencies. Again, chiefs could serve on advisory bodies of the Assemblies such as joint committees of District Assembly and chiefs that focus on specific development themes such as the environment, land, health, education, social practices, etc. Where these bodies have already been established, they could be expanded to include chiefs, or creating new ones to include chiefs where they do not exist.

The second list of options focus on involving chiefs in local governance. Here, the focus is on the formal recognition and acknowledgement of the present contributions of chiefs in district and community development and local governance by the District Assemblies and central government. This will require that the current contributions of chiefs in the development of their communities are recognised and properly factored into the development plans of the District Assemblies. It also implies that the functions of chiefs should be seen as being complimentary rather than conflictual whereby the District Assemblies could enlist people's participation and mobilise local communities through the support and involvement of traditional leaders. The possible options, which can be pursued by the District Assemblies are as follows:

- Formalised the involvement of chiefs in District Assemblies’ development projects and programmes.
- Assist chiefs to mobilise customary values in support of activities such as health immunisation, civic education and reforestation programmes.
- Support traditional leader-organised development programmes.
• Organise and support traditional leaders-community meetings or fora.
• Actively assist in the resolution of customary disputes (resort where necessary to joint traditional-state bodies such as the Houses of Chiefs).
• Creation of networks of traditional leaders, officials and researchers to discuss research policy questions involving traditional authority so as to produce improved policy results.

CONCLUSION
The chieftaincy institution in Ghana has enjoyed the glory, powers and prestige of the pre-colonial era, has survived through the vicissitudes of the colonial period, and has reconciled to the new political system of the post-colonial period which has gradually reduced the functions, powers and status of the institution. Nonetheless, traditional leadership has maintained important cultural, social, judicial functions at local and community levels (see Sharma 1997). It is for these reasons that their integration into the formal decentralised system especially at the district level could contribute to rapid socio-economic development of districts in Ghana.

To sum up the discussions, let me note the observation made by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum meeting held in 1995, which studied traditional organisations and leadership patterns in some African countries with the view of providing practical guidance in reviewing relations with traditional leaders and formal institutions. While the Forum admits that some traditional practices are authoritarian and ill-suited to present-day conditions, the Forum suggested that:

traditional leadership, in its form before external interference [colonial rule], operated on the principle of community participation, consultation, consensus, and an acceptable level of transparency through the village council or open tribal consultative meetings. These principles are not too different from the ones, which modern democracies prescribe as essential for democracy! It might serve the purpose, therefore, that countries of Africa [including Ghana] which are striving to gain good governance should look with renewed detail to the role of traditional leaders, and pay specific attention to the similarities between the principles of traditional governance and the aspirations of new democracies the world over (Venson 1995: 2).

(Nwaka 2004).

In the context of Ghana, the above principles characterised as associated with traditional institutions and leadership by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum are also not all that different from the goals and objectives of the country’s decentralisation programme. Moreover, the chieftaincy institution has
shown amazing resilience as demonstrated by the failure of the colonial and post-colonial state to reduce or eliminate its influence. Such resilience is attributable in part to the readiness of young men and women to rally behind their chiefs in times of difficulties. More significantly, the foregoing discussions indicate that the chieftaincy institution is a revered institution, which would be indispensable in the administration of the country. This is more the case as the institution itself continues to change, and adapt to changing circumstances. The way forward is for the modern governance system to engaged the institution with the view to enhance its own legitimacy, and facilitate mobilisation of both human and material resources for district and national development. The relationship between traditional leaders and local, regional and national governments should be interactive: traditional leaders can legitimate the state by acting on behalf of the state objectives of development and democratisation, while the state sets the terms of traditional leaders' legitimacy in the contemporary era and also by providing new frameworks and resources within which traditional leadership can operate.

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