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The Role of Traditional Authorities in Local Governance

Christiana Kangsangbata[1] and Prof S.B Kendie[2]

[1]University for Development Studies
[2]Institute for Development Studies, University of Cape Coast

Abstract

The role of traditional Authorities in local governance was the subject of the study. The research design consisted of various methods of data collection including in-depth face-to face interviews, document reviews and observations. One technique that was used throughout the research to get information from all traditional role players was the appreciative technique. The population was made up of opinion leaders, settlers, chiefs, fetish priests, identified group leaders, tengdamba (land owners), family heads and local government staff. The instruments were pretested for reliability. The analysis consisted of describing qualitative data while quantitative data was analysed using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences). It emerged that traditional institutions have more good to offer the District Assembly in local governance than their limitation of the work of the Assembly. The institutions have remained resilient in the face of modern challenges because of the confidence and trust people have in them and are prepared to defend them. People perceive traditional authorities to present their history, norms, values and belief systems; it is believed society would get much more substantially than if they are excluded.

Key Words: Traditional authorities, Good Governance, Development

Introduction

Democratic decentralisation and participatory governance are considered attributes of good governance and have dominated the development discourse in recent times. This is due to a growing sense of disillusionment with centralised governance. It is now widely believed that modern governance should be spread across many levels and across multiple contents of authority. The move towards decentralised form of governance is to achieve full participation of the hitherto marginalised, through local governance. Citizens' participation in local governance is now seen as an essential pre-condition for effective and good governance (Manor, 1995).

Stoker (1996:19) defined local governance as a process in which governing outcomes depend on the interaction of a complex set of institutions and actors drawn from, but also beyond local government. This definition neatly encapsulates two key features of governance. First, it interprets governance as a process and not an end state, thereby capturing the dynamics of change implicit in governance. Second, it hints on the growth of networks, partnership and other organisations within civil society that are involved in conveying governance. This socio-centric viewpoint emphasises the pervasiveness of networks and partnerships within civil society that are capable of governing themselves free from state control.

In a bid to achieve the attributes of good governance in Ghana, the ruling Provincial National Defence Council (PNDC) introduced the decentralisation programme in 1988 where power was devolved to the local areas for local governance. In other words, local governance simply means bringing governance to the door steps of the beneficiaries of governance so that they can participate in decision taking, and its implementation, and enjoy its impact. Decentralisation then has become an inevitable component of local governance since without it there cannot be any meaningful local governance. This study sought to assess the role of traditional authorities who work within these institutions in order to ascertain their credibility in promoting good governance.

Conceptual Issues

Governance is somewhat an elastic concept. It has been interpreted in many different ways so as to encompass many different aspects of social organisation and the institutional framework within which social and economic activities are performed. Governance could therefore be defined as the strategies and plans that a government adopts to achieve the socio-economic upliftment (development) of a society, district, region or nation (World Bank, 1992).

The realisation of the human (social, political and cultural) aspect of development is what has brought good governance into the development discourse. It is being increasingly argued that without an appropriate governance structure, the developing countries would not be able to generate either sustained growth or momentum towards rapid poverty reduction.

In the view of Darko (2003), good governance refers to the sustenance of democratic institutions; that is, an independent and respectable judiciary, the practice of free and fair elections, a representative parliament, a free vibrant and responsible press, and traditional rulers who ably advise government in matters relating to chieftaincy and tradition. In a nutshell, good governance in his view is governance according to the rule of law.

According to the World Bank (1992), good governance is synonymous with sound development management which is central to creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development and it is an essential compliment to good economic policies. Serageldin and Landell-Mills (1991) on the other hand define good governance as encompassing the nature of fixing of a state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making processes, policy formulation, implementing capacity, information flows, effectiveness of leadership and the nature of the relationship between rulers and ruled.

It is obvious from the above definitions that good governance involves the strategies, plans and structures which a government puts in place to achieve

development. Accountability, transparency and the rule of law are considered elements of good governance. In short, good governance means adopting democratic ideas as a strategy in development planning. This has come about because there is a growing conviction that an efficient government is a "sine qua non", for sustainable development.

Amoako (2004) is of the view that, there is no question that the world has a right to pass judgment on the state of Africa's governance. But it is Africans themselves who bear the responsibility for action, including the tailoring of their own approaches to their problems. According to him, some experts of good governance suggest that Africa adopts the discipline and firm stance of certain countries in Asia. Some advise Africans to emulate the openness and liberal nature of the western democracies, because in certain respects, Africans are last in the line of development. He reiterates that, as much as Africa can gain lots of experiences elsewhere, these so–called concerned people should know that Africa has its own experiences, its own best cases, and its own storehouse of culture and governance to draw on. In addition, Africa faces a unique country - by country challenges, each reflecting a history of complex political and cultural dynamics. Thus, according to him, "there is no cookie-cutter solution to development". This statement has a lot of implications for this study. It implies that, governance is contextual, cultural, and unique.

The World Bank (1994) identifies four essential components of good governance-equity, sustainability, productivity and empowerment If development is to enlarge people's choices, people must enjoy equitable access to opportunities. Equity in access to opportunities demands restructuring of power in many societies and changes along certain lines: First, there must be change in distribution of productive assets especially through land reforms. Second, there must be restructuring in the distribution of income through progressive fiscal policy aimed at transferring income from the rich to the poor. This means overhauling of credit systems so that the credit requirements of the

people are satisfactorily met. Third, it requires ensuring equity in political opportunities through voting rights reforms, financial reform, and other actions aimed at limiting the excessive political power of a feudal minority and undertaking steps to remove social and legal barriers that limit access to women or other minorities to some of the key social and political opportunities.

The next generation deserves the opportunity to enjoy the same well being that we now enjoy and this right makes sustainability an essential component of the human development paradigm. At times, the concept of sustainability is confused with the renewal of natural resources, which is just one aspect of sustainable development. In our present context, it is the sustainability of human opportunities that is of concern. This in turn requires sustaining all forms of capital-human, physical, financial and environmental. Sustainability is a matter of distributional equity, of sharing developmental opportunities between present and future generations and ensuring intergenerational worthwhile life opportunities. Thus, an unjust world is inherently unsustainable (Kansangbata, 2006). This concept also implies removing the disparities, both political and economic, between various nations of the world.

Governance envisages full empowerment of the people. Empowerment means that people are in a position to exercise choices of their own free will. Empowerment also implies a political democracy in which people can influence decisions about their lives. It requires economic liberalism so that people are free from excessive controls and regulations. It means decentralisation of power so that real governance is brought to the door step of every person. It also means that all the members of a civil society, particularly non-governmental organisations join in the development process.

Participation is an essential ingredient in good governance. Indeed, it has been argued that, participatory development can be seen as a local level reflection of good governance. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government, there is the need to involve the people in the decision

making process, so as to ensure that the people who are going to be affected by development plans would know the options available to them so that they would indeed participate.

Al-Yasha (2003) uses the term traditional institutions to denote indigenous forms of cultural identity formation and nation-state governance. He contrasts this with the "modern" African nation state which retains vestiges of European colonialism in land distribution, amalgamated cultural / linguistic groupings and political structure. Fleishchaker (1994: 45) defines tradition as "a set of customs passed down over generations, and a set of beliefs and values endorsing those customs". Kendie, et al (2004) use the term to refer to, for instance, chieftaincy rule, customary law, healing or religious practices. The term traditional, consequently, bears the connotation of social arrangements, strongly rooted in a locality.

How democratic are traditional institutions?

Democracy is a system of government based on the consent of the people and one in which the mandate to rule is subject to periodic renewal. Modern democratic governance also entails citizens' representation (Centre for Democratic Development, 2001).

Increasingly, African scholars insist that whereas Western ideas about democracy are specifically rooted in the notion of political and social rights for individuals, the reality in Africa is still one in which "collectives" or ethnic "groups" rather than individuals are demanding social justice. In this context, what matters is respect for African culture and languages and ethnic concerns in the distribution of the country's or world's resources.

Tangwa (1996) argues that traditional African leadership and authority systems might be understood as "the harmonious marriage between autocratic dictatorship and popular democracy". Specified formal practices positioned the citizenry to critique, authorise and sanction their rulers; their continued reign and

the selection and ascension of their successors. Ritzenthaler and Ritzenthaler (1964) describe the king making procedure of the Bafut kingdom of Cameroon as the exercise of democracy in traditional institutions where, when the new ruler has been installed, he is presented to the Bafut population for "stoning". The ceremonial stoning may consist of tiny, harmless pebbles in the case of an approved and respected new leader, or of large, injurious rocks hurled so as to maim, chase or kill the undesired incumbent. In either case, it reminds the new ruler what could happen if his rule becomes illegitimate.

There are special festivals such as "Apor" celebrated in Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana during which the chief can be publicly criticised, even insulted by ordinary citizens. A similar opportunity is afforded in the Ga traditional system during the annual Homowo festival. More importantly, citizens have a constitutional right to destool their chiefs if they are found to have committed serious crimes or broken a taboo. Crimes such as murder, and theft; misdemeanours such as taking someone's wife, or in the old days not producing a child, were automatic grounds for destoolment in the Akan political system. Chiefs could also jeopardise their stools if they were seen as violating their oath – not consulting on decisions, not being available to the people, being despotic and so on (Centre for Democratic Development, 2001).

Among the people of the Upper West Region, in order to ensure transparency, a chief goes no where alone, there is always a witness. Again, there are customary codes that underline the limited power of the chief and the power relations between the chief and his subjects such as the following: "If a chief reprimands you for doing something, he does so by the authority of the citizens"; "There are no bad chiefs, only bad advisors"; "It is when the state kills you that the chief kills you". One gold-embossed emblem on top of the staff held by the chief's spokesman during public ceremonies depicts an egg in the hand; the symbol likens power to an egg. Held too firmly, the egg breaks; held too loosely, the egg falls out of the hand.

Again, Dake (1996) holds the view that traditional African authorities are autocratic and that has been transferred to modern democratic ideas, making governance undemocratic. Ajei (2001), in an attempt to prove the existence of democracy in African traditional systems, outlines the political system of Ashanti. Ajei thinks the Ashanti traditional system is democratic while for Dake, traditional African institutions are autocratic. Appiah (1993), on the other hand, contends that the democratic aspects of traditional leadership were weakened by the colonial processes, and queens and kings did not generally allow the lay citizens' interests to take priority in national response to colonial invasion. Thus, if the king did not suffer much during colonialism, a number of his subjects clearly did.

The role of traditional authorities in democratic governance in Africa
Some African scholars contend that there were traditional forms of democracy, autocracy, monarchy and oligarchy in state-organised societies as well as stateless societies in pre-colonial times. They assert that the African political systems functioned, not because of their form, but because they fulfilled felt needs in the societies. The current opportunities for democratic participation and good governance in most African states seem unprecedented, yet there have been many failures. A significant part of this lies in the overlooked traditional relationship between the contemporary African state and traditional authority (Skinner, 1970). By implication, traditional institutions are crucial in achieving the purpose of local governance.

To Skinner (1970), the expected benefits of decentralisation are clearly dependent on whether local government and, more broadly speaking, local institutions are up to the job. He indicates that in the context of governance of a modern state, an important issue is the extent to which the chiefs and other traditional authorities may be involved in local governance. For instance, in Swaziland, chiefs are responsible for all local government functions including crime prevention and taxes, and states are challenged by the traditional authority

because the institution of chieftaincy is the centre of local political life in many areas in that country. According to Assimeng (2001: 93):

The role of traditional leaders in local government in Ghana has undergone significant changes since colonial days. The 1992 constitution and the various legislation on local government gives the traditional authorities minimal responsibilities with little or no recognition of their leadership in central and local government decision making processes. It is our responsibility as local government planners to establish or re-establish legitimate structures that will provide for the empowerment of traditional leaders to assume greater responsibility for local development and provide checks and balances for good governance.

Once upon a time, the traditional ruler was supreme at the level of local governance. He combined the positions of military leader, spiritual head, administrator of justice and the over lord of peace and order in his domain. Now, however, colonialism, Christian and Islamic evangelisation, formal western education and economy, have all worked to whittle down the powers and fame once wielded by traditional rulers. Even then, the chief remains the primary focus of local level loyalty and cultural expression. In the modern era of socio - economic development, chiefs are expected to create and sustain favourable environments for such development. In Kyeremeh's (1995) view, since the social, political, economic and security ramifications of the institutions are wide-ranging, it is unwise to leave them without some monitoring, collaboration, and a show of interest by the government. This implies that in several aspects of life, traditional authorities are relevant to the democratic move.

A past Minister for Local Government and Rural Development in Ghana, Honourable Kwadwo Baah Wiredu, in a keynote address to chiefs saw traditional authorities as being positively correlated to local governance. He saw chiefs as very necessary element of local governance who have very important roles to play (Assimeng 2001). Odenehu Oduro Numapau, the Paramount chief of

Essumja in Asante, Ghana, in the same publication indicates that before colonisation, chieftaincy was the fulcrum of society in Ghana. It gave unity and direction to the people and mobilised them for common purposes.

In Nabilla's (2001) view, based on their individual expertise and experiences chiefs continue to contribute in various non-partisan positions to the development of the nation. The deliberations at the various Houses of Chiefs, which are held in an open and transparent manner with recording of minutes, can all be a useful tool for good governance if only they are fed into the government machinery. This goes to support Assimeng's suggestion that since chiefs are an embodiment of tradition, norms and values of the people they represent, their activities should be very crucial for local governance planning.

Joining the debate, Miller (1970: 190), in a study conducted into the role of traditional authorities in Tanzanian development, warned about the need to harmonise the role of Tanzanian traditional rulers in development and governance so as to avoid conflict. He wrote that:

> *Viewed from the higher areas of government in the new nations, the rural leader is an insignificant individual who goes about managing his local affairs and carrying out-with varying degrees of success-the policies and hopes of the government. Viewed from below, from the inner recesses of the village, the leader is a man of authority, a man who has used wealth, hereditary or personal magnetism to gain a position of influence.*

He argued that rural leaders were the key to development planning in the areas, and worried that "any lack of initiative... would entrench the status quo and doom the modernisation plans before they begin it". In Miller's opinion, peace and order are essential prerequisites for meaningful socio-economic development; so also are clarities in the customs and practices which are embedded in the institutions. Thus a "hands-off" policy on the institutions is not entirely possible.

Nor is it possible, or even worthwhile, to "return" the institution to the pristine pomp and power of pre-colonial days.

Therefore chiefs can play a role of clarifying customs and norms to government, where practices that offer opportunities for development would be sifted from those that do not. In Assimeng's (2001) view, even if these institutions are not good, leaving them untouched is more dangerous. Kendie et al (2004) are of the view that traditional institutions, as long as they are not immoral can be built upon. The authors cite the philosophy of allegiance, for example, as a value that can be a premise for modern democratic ideas.

Chieftaincy and resource management

Traditional authorities play indispensable roles in the economic activities of their people, thus ensuring that sustenance and reproduction continue unhindered. Several of the conflicts in Ghana are centred on claims to economic resources. The issue surrounding land ownership and use conflicts are well known and have often resulted in widespread conflicts sometimes engulfing whole families and ethnic groups.

One of the major areas of resource management by traditional institutions is in land administration and acquisition. There are various views concerning traditional institutions and land administration. Myrdral (1974) asserts that there are many inhibitions and obstacles in the path of agricultural productivity, but the main obstacles are undoubtedly rooted in systems of land ownership and tenancy. In the view of Elkan (1959), forms of traditional tenure no matter their differences resist the opportunities for obtaining and parting with land. In Mifsuf's (1967) view, customary tenure is not simply a type of land holding but also has wide ramifications for the social systems, way of life and beliefs of the people. These beliefs have serious implications for rural development. Land is valued not for itself alone, its possession is a form of security, a symbol of prestige and a source of poverty (Gadalla, 1970).

Despite the inhibiting nature of land tenure in Ghana, in Ware's (1975) view, traditional authorities have been steadfast in their defence of existing tenurial systems within each community. Traditional systems of land tenure guarantee each member, the right access to land for farming and housing. It also accepts and recognises the need of the general public and through institutionalised government; land is made available for projects.

The views presented above on traditional institutions and land administration as usual represent contrasting views on traditional institutions. While some think the traditional system of land acquisition limits development, others like Ware (1975) think that traditional authorities have been steadfast in their defence of the land and should rather be applauded.

Kyeremeh (1995) has indicated that traditional authorities have a mobilisation power. This view is also supported by Assimeng (2001: 23) when he says, "as force for mobilisation of our people for productive efforts, chiefs should be in the fore front of our development process. Traditional authorities are the focus of mobilisation and participation in decision making at the grassroots level".

Millar (2002: 26), in a study conducted in the Wenchi traditional area, states that:

> *Indigenous structures and systems exist for natural resource management. It was important to also note that spirituality is a part of this structure and is evoked to instil fear or punish those who are considered to have performed acts contrary to the dictates of sound environmental management.*

It can be perfectly understood that Millar sees in traditional institutions the potential of environmental management. Again, the issue of spirituality can also be used to manage crises. According to him, it all depends on how "change agents" are able to reconstruct this rich culture and take advantage of its strong points of entry for their development activities.

Kendie et al (2004) found out that apart from certain weaknesses associated with traditional institutions there are good aspects that have the potential to move good governance. They cite the function of the asafo groups as mobilising agents, serving as security guards and also being there for the general protection of the community.

Role of chiefs in conflict resolution
Chiefs have been most active in dispute resolution both in Africa generally and in Ghana particularly where parties, disenchanted with the procedures of the formal courts, have clamoured for traditional modes of resolution. Indeed dispute resolution would have been impossible without the active involvement of chiefs in all parts of Ghana.

Conceptual framework
It can be concluded that while development is the goal of every country, good governance with its democratic attributes is the strategy universally accepted to achieve development. Local governance in this context could mean adopting relevant methods to achieve local level development. According to Fekade (1994:47), Local refers to the "spatial delineation of a limited size in which its inhabitants share problems, threats/constrains and resources. The inhabitants are routinely interlinked by common identity (language, history, culture, physical patterns such as settlements, roads, shared service centres and commonly felt needs and appreciation of problems and mobilisable potentials".

Thus "local" has a cultural and geographical connotation. Local governance therefore means governance of a people in a particular place and of a certain culture. If governance is the strategy to attain development, then local governance can mean strategies used to administer a people of a particular place and of a certain culture in order to attain development. Traditional institutions then become very necessary in the strategies adopted to achieve local level

development. This is because, development strategies must be situated in a context. It is therefore very necessary that traditional authorities and government / modern development actors work together to achieve local level development instead of the one-sided view of the modernisation theory.

Model for local level development
Local level development is noted by Fekade (1994:46) as emanating from the following attributes:
- Community/Locality.
- Meeting of the basic needs of the population.
- Environmental sustainability.
- Access to resources and opportunity to employ one's energy.
- Accommodating external processes.

In his view, the intervention of external agents in local level development is very relevant if it is mediated through local institutions. The local institutions facilitate the organisation of the local people to undertake active part in the development process. In this direction, it is the local institutions that control and define the terms under which external agents operate. External agents then become partners in development, playing supportive roles and not substantive roles (Fekade, 1994:49). This means external agents are only to offer advice and suggestions but it is local institutions that determine the pace of development.

Fekade's model (Fig 1) fits into this study since it expresses the relevance of the interaction between external agents and local agents which may be likened to government actors and traditional authorities respectively in this study.

External actors are very important in promoting good governance at the local level if they mediate through traditional authorities. Traditional authorities and external actors, as depicted in figure 1, facilitate organisation of the local people to take active part in the development process. Government officials (external agents) then become partners in development playing supportive roles

and not substantive roles (Fekade, 1994:49). This means government officials are only to offer advice and suggestions but it is local people that determine the pace of development.
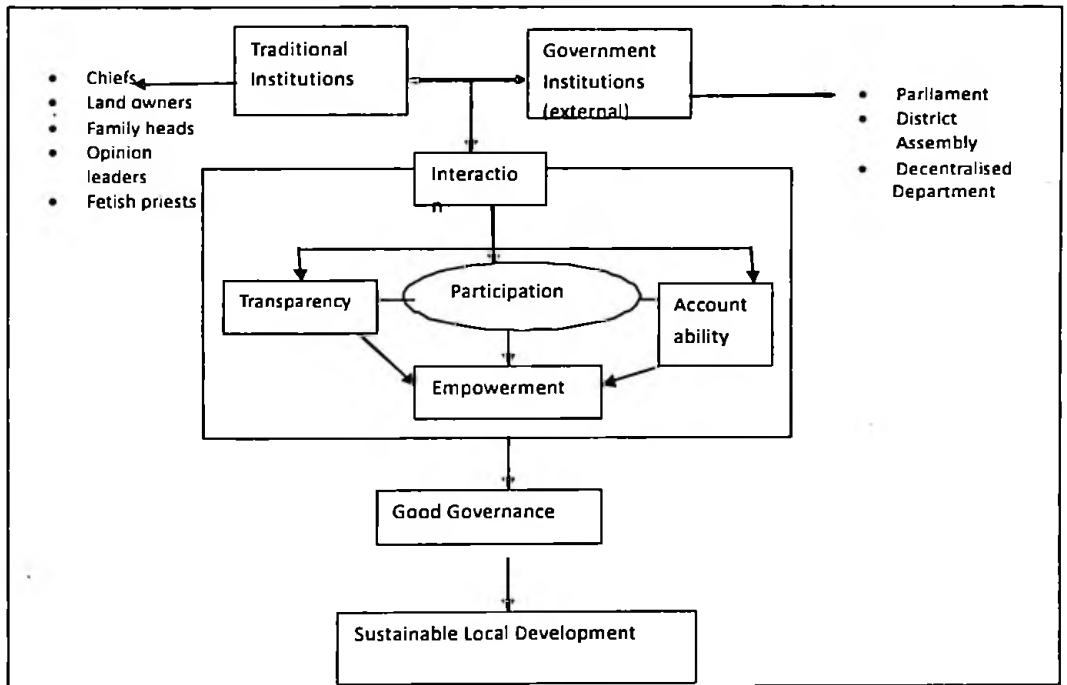
Fig 1: Model for local level Development

Figure 2: Determining Factors for Sustainable Local Level Development
Source: Adapted from Fekade, 1994:48
Source: Fekade 1994

As a force for mobilising people for productive efforts, traditional authorities are conduits through which the purpose to empower people at the local level can be achieved. Traditional authorities and external actors as shown in figure 1 are partners in development. This realisation should lead to collaboration between the two. Government officials are only to offer advice and suggestions but it is the local people that should determine the pace of development. Interaction between traditional and government authorities leads to efficient governance since both parties learn from each other; while traditional authorities learn more about democracy, government officials learn about the people. As a result there is a proper fitting of modern democratic ideas into the traditional (local) context.

In their interaction, local government (traditional authorities and government officials) should as much as possible be transparent and accountable to the people. In this case, people are put in the knowledge of choices available and state of affairs, with feedbacks in all cases, regarding legitimate concerns and explanations on all matters, that is, knowledge for understanding and knowledge for action.

Empowering the people means the flow of power from the District Assembly, through traditional authorities to the people. Local people may exercise choices of their own free will, decide on what they need and not government officials providing what they think the people need. As a result, people are involved in the choice of what development ventures to undertake, plan and implement. In short, government officials at the local level are to help establish structures that would provide for the empowerment of traditional leaders to assume greater responsibility for local development (Kyeremeh, 1995).

Through local participation, community members express their needs, problems and priorities without which development programmes and projects are likely to fail (Adarkwa and Diaw, 1999:2).While participation has been recognised

as essential in the development process in Ghana, this is not likely to happen without the following conditions (Kendie, 1997:15):

- Real commitment of politicians and administrators to allow communities to control critical decision-making issues such as needs assessment.
- Strong civil society organisations able to mobilise the people to demand both participation and the rendering of quality services by state institutions.
- Open political structures at all levels.
- Participation not being only instrumental but also an end in itself.

The inter-play of these factors is to create conditions that will enable each human being to realise his/her potential for social, economic and political fulfilment (empowerment) in a manner that will lead to the achievement of sustainable development.

According to Seyonjo (2002), even though excluding chiefs from local government is consistent with theories of political development in downplaying ascriptive rights, the implication is great since there are still areas in Africa where no development is possible unless it is routed through and backed by traditional leaders.

Modern political ideas of democracy in Europe emanated from traditional European institutions with their system of thought, organisation and belief. Through constant re-examination and refinement of received European traditions by philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, Adam Smith, Hobbes, Karl Marx, Engels, John Stuart Mills, and Machiavelli among others, modern ideas of democracy, justice, and efficient governance were devised.

The development of democratic political institutions in Britain, for instance, most probably the oldest democracy, began with the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215. But it took many centuries for that institution to evolve into present forms, an evolution process that was guided by the compass of a historical and cultural circumstance. The process had to jump or knock down

such hurdles as autocracies, military dictatorships, and claims to divine right of power, enlightened or benevolent ideas, positions, strong and unyielding monarchical systems and other impediments to the establishment of democracy.

It is perfectly understood from Donnelly (1984) that post colonial leaders did not understand this fact. They adopted colonial institutions wholesale irrespective of the fact that the traditional institutions had alternative approaches to governance. These alternative approaches could form an intellectual reference point for the transition to new system. These institutions represented indigenous evolution systems of governance which people related to socially, emotionally and intellectually. They were legitimate by nature in terms of history, experience and the fact that they were indigenously conceived and had a force of wisdom of the people. To Seyonjo (2002), the proper approach to governance would have been to borrow ideas from the western political systems, modify the political systems with their assistance, and in partnership with indigenous traditional leaders come up with a hybrid of local legitimacy.

In a nutshell it can be deduced that instead of taking all western ideas of governance, those ideas should rather be of assistance in shaping traditional institutions to fit developmental purpose of the nation concerned. In which case development planning would be based on the people, their norms, values, and beliefs, which is a true reflection of democracy.

Kendie et al (2004) acknowledge that there are great strengths as much as there are weaknesses in traditional institutions and that there exist great potentials in them for development. They amply demonstrate the ability of traditional authorities in supplementing government's efforts at elimination and control of child-streetism, support for education, successful fund raising, scholarship grants for needy children, provision of educational infrastructure, social services (including village electrification), support for health delivery and funerals and cultural development and economic assistance to townsfolk in the form of capital mobilisation and provision of credit.

Data, methods and presentation of findings

Empowerment in the context of the study is defined as enablement, enhancement, and upliftment of a people, politically, socially and economically. Empowerment means the flow of power from traditional authorities to the people to exercise choices of their own free will. It also involves taking measures to protect the rights of the vulnerable in society. All categories of respondents recognise the role of traditional authorities in empowering people through the following ways:

- Initiate development activities such as the building of schools, clinics and boreholes (28%).
- Preach against acts that undermine women's upliftment such as female genital mutilation and widowhood rites (13.4 %).
- Educate people on their basic rights and responsibilities (13.7).
- Hold meetings to explain actions and inactions (10 %).

able 1: Traditional Authorities and the Promotion of Empowerment (%

Responses	Chiefs		Opinion leaders	Settlers	Governme nt actors	Total
Nothing	5.8	5	30	30	5.9	28
Explain actions	17.3		10	10	11.8	10
Discourage acts that undermine women	0		2	36	0	13.4
Educate on rights	28.6		25.3	24	17.6	20.5
Initiate development activities	48.1		32.7	0	64.7	28
Total (%)	100		100	10	100	100
Number	52		152	0	17	217

Source: Fieldwork, 2005

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Participation means inclusion or involvement of the people by traditional authorities in the social, political and economic decision making processes, implementation and benefits. Responses like; before a decision is taken, there is a deliberation by elders who represent the people, there is no partiality in decision taking where some people's views are considered more vital than others and the people are represented by the chiefs in decision making came up. According to

them, before any decision is taken by the traditional council, chiefs meet with elders and present their views at the traditional council.

Most of the government officials (76.5 %) said there is free deliberation and judgement in the decision making system. This adds some credibility to the chiefs' response (76 %) that there is no partiality in decision making. Government actors and traditional authorities seem to agree on this point. Again, about 29% of respondents, a majority of whom are settlers and opinion leaders, declined to comment. The role of traditional authorities in promoting participation is ordered as follows:

- There is free deliberation of issues and judgement in the decision making process (52.9%).
- No partiality in decision taking (14.2%).

People are represented by chiefs (3.2 %).

Table 2: Traditional Authorities and the Promotion of Participation (%)

Responses	Chiefs	Opinion leaders	Settlers	Government actors	Total
No comment	15.4	30	30	23.5	29.4
Free deliberation of issues	0	51	50	76.5	52.9
No partiality in decision	76	14	12	0	14.2
People are represented by chiefs	7.6	4.6	0	0	3.2
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Number	52	150	50	150	217

Source: Field Survey, 2005

Equity means according the same rights and opportunities to the people economically, politically and socially. It implies undertaking steps to remove all social, political and economic factors that limit access to opportunities. Respondents said traditional authorities give people the same opportunities in decision taking, not being partial in judgement, according women the same opportunities like men, ensuring equitable distribution of resources and treating people fairly irrespective of background. One opinion leader said traditional authorities rule by traditional laws, which generally ensure fairness.

Ninety eight percent (98%) of chiefs said traditional authorities accord people the same opportunities. The credibility of this response is ascertained by the response of opinion leaders (90 %) who from the previous data have been among the categories that mostly declined to comment on how traditional authorities limit democracy. The fact that only one opinion leader said traditional authorities rule by laws shows that this is not a dominant feature of traditional authorities. Thirty percent (30%), majority of whom are government actors declined to comment on traditional authorities and how they promote equity. For government actors this may indicate lack of knowledge in that respect. For settlers and opinion leaders it indicates the reverence they associate with the power of traditional authorities. Ordering the role of traditional authorities in promoting equity, one gets the following:

- Accord everyone the same recognition and opportunities (69.5%).
- Rule by laws (0.3%).

Table 3: Traditional Authorities and the Promotion of Equity (%)

Responses	Chiefs	Opinion leaders	Settlers	Government actors	Total
No comment	1.9	29.3	30	35.3	30
Same opportunities	98	90	70	64.7	69.5
Rule by laws	0	0.7	0	0	0.3
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Number	52	150	50	17	217

Source: Field Survey, 2005

Traditional authorities and promotion of accountability
Accountability in the context of the study means how politically, socially, and economically responsible traditional authorities are towards the people. It also includes being responsive to the needs of the people. In short, it means the recognition by traditional authorities that power belongs to the people. Table 19 shows that traditional authorities are accountable in the following ways: Hold land in trust for the people. As such, traditional authorities see themselves as accountable to their ancestors, the present and future generations for land bequeathed to all by their ancestors. According to Dam, an opinion leader "the measure traditional authorities use is whether they can match the high standards set by their predecessors or have lived up to expectation". Again, traditional authorities report back to the people on important meetings attended and important assignments. Report is also given on how resources are used. Also, the table reveals that another way traditional authorities account to the people is to explain actions and inactions.

An overwhelming majority of government actors (88%) said traditional authorities promote accountability by holding land in trust for the people. This adds credibility to the response most chiefs gave. Only one person (0.4%) out of the 217 respondents said traditional authorities rule by laws of the land. In a way, this query's the credibility of the response. Again, 29% of the respondents, most of whom are settlers declined to comment. This may be attributed to inability of settlers to air their views because of the feeling that they are not indigenes and so traditional authorities in the traditional area do not have to account to them. Table 19 reveals the role of traditional authorities in promoting accountability in the following order:

- Hold land in trust for the people (57.6%).
- Hold forums to explain actions and inactions (13%).
- Rule by the laws of the land (0.4%).

Table 4: Traditional Authorities and the Promotion of Accountability (%)

Responses	Chiefs	Opinion leaders	Settlers	Governme nt actors	Total
No comment	11.5	29.3	34	11.8	29
Hold land in trust for the people	86.5	70	10	88.2	57.6
Feed back to the people	1.9	0	0	0	0.4
Explain actions	0	0.7	56.1	0	13
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Number	52	150	50	17	217

Source: Fieldwork, 2005

Traditional authorities and the promotion of sustainable development
Sustainability in development means how traditional authorities are able to ensure continuity of the benefits derived from available resources. It is the recognition on the part of traditional authorities that, the next generation deserves the opportunity to enjoy the same wellbeing that the present generation now enjoys. The study found out that traditional authorities protect resources such as dams, economic trees, farmlands, wild life, wells, animals and human resources through the enactment of laws, sensitisation programmes and taboos.

Again, it was revealed that traditional authorities ensure sustainable development through periodic maintenance of facilities such as roads, youth centres, clinics, schools and market places through levies to replace facilities, organisation of communal labour to repair facilities and constant supervision to ensure judicious use of facilities. In this respect, the chief of Nyene said that people are trained in the community to repair bore holes anytime there is a breakdown. Some chiefs such as the chief of Gbari sensitises his people on the need to bequeath a legacy for future generation. Also, in ensuring sustainability in human resources, people are trained by traditional authorities to take up the mantle of leadership when they are not there. The chief of Kungkyeni said he constantly calls on the vertinary office to check the health of all animals in his community. Most government actors (about 94%) said traditional authorities maintain resources. It came out clearly from the study that government actors (94.1 percent) recognise the potential of traditional authorities to promote sustainable development. It is, therefore, surprising that local government staff do not collaborate with traditional authorities in this respect.

Table 5: Traditional authorities and their promotion of sustainable development

Responses	Chiefs	Opinion leaders	Settlers	Government actors	Total
No comment	5.8	34	34	5.9	31
Protect resources	94.2	66	64	0	60.3
Maintain resources	0	0	2	94.1	7.8
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Number	52	150	50	17	217

Source: Field Survey, 2005 and updated in 2007

Conclusion and policy implications of the findings

So many development projects have failed due to failure to recognise the role of traditional institutions (Kendie and Guri, 2004). This problem might continue if structures are not put in place to make the provision made by the Constitution of Ghana to include traditional authorities in development planning practicable. The perception that traditional authorities are backward and so do not promote development have been allayed by the findings of this study that, the democratic elements outweigh the undemocratic aspects. Thus, traditional roles are consistent with modern government roles. Government needs to pursue a more pragmatic and integrated local development planning, implementation and assessment.

The study also found that traditional authorities, despite their lack of formal education are highly respected by the people. Therefore if people are now the target of governance, then it suggests that the government must formulate

policies that will empower traditional authorities to maximise their full potential. This implies that government needs to train/educate traditional authorities on good governance to make them more relevant to modern governance. About 85% of chiefs said they consulted with local government staff, meanwhile local government staff said they only need their help when they are operating within the community. This suggests that, in order to actualise the plans for chiefs to contribute their quota to the development process, a conscious effort should be made at joint planning between government officials and traditional authorities where the two will operate as the same people seeking a common goal but with different background, consulting each other for the good of the local area.

The study found that there was a low level of consultation. Government officials thought they were there to execute the plans of the central government and so though they acknowledged the importance of traditional institutions, in the traditional setting, they did not see their need in the work of the District Assembly. This suggests that government should encourage more research into traditional institutions, and disseminate the findings to enhance the understanding of government officials on traditional institutions. There is also the need for government to define roles and responsibilities, and to encourage a positive attitude of local government staff towards traditional authorities through constant dialogue.

The study found that traditional authorities perform roles that are similar to that of the government staff at the local level. Chiefs are the administrative and political heads of their communities, ensuring the general welfare of everyone under them by doing things that will satisfy them socially, economically and politically. The landlords are considered the traditional security guards of their communities, faithfully guarding against any harmful thing that will affect the environment or members of the communities both spiritually and physically. "It looks like the work of the landlord is what has been lifted and put in the assembly" (Charles Gandie, a landlord).

Family heads perform the same role as chiefs but at the family level. This suggests that family heads could be agents for disseminating government policies down to the root of the local level. So far, it appears one of the agents responsible for bringing governance to the door steps of people was being ignored. It is recommended that government identifies and sensitises this important group in the decentralisation process.

Fetish priests, comprising traditional healers and soothsayers are the traditional doctors, healing complex diseases, instilling fear in people through taboos to enforce traditional laws that are meant for sustainable development. All these traditional authorities jointly resolve disputes amicably before they escalate into crisis, promote acts that conform to the dictates of sound environmental management and see it as a spiritual responsibility to treat people equally.

It was observed that, traditional authorities have more elements that enhance good governance than limitation, though these elements were in degrees. The number one democratic element found was empowerment, Accountability was 2nd, participation 3rd, equity 4th, and sustainability 5th.

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