

The Role of Customary Governance Systems in Enhancing Local Democracy: The Case of Ghana

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Local governance, decentralization and democracy are components of the Ghanaian traditional chieftaincy institution. This institution in the past engendered participatory democracy, good governance and social protection but is currently challenged by formal decentralization of public administration. Although the institution has remained intact, its functions have gone through several paradigm shifts both during the colonial and the post-independence eras of Ghana. Currently, the chieftaincy does not form part of the formal local government administration structure. In an enigmatic form, it maintains an informal and sacrosanct niche in local governance. There is a need for redefinition and clarification of the roles of the chieftaincy institution within the nexus of traditions, demands of good governance and modern local democracy to enable it to provide a complementary conduit for effective and efficient local governance for development.

Keywords: *customary governance, chieftaincy institution, traditional governance, decentralization, local government, local democracy*

Introduction

Local governance, decentralization and democracy are expected to be integral attributes of the traditional Ghanaian institution of chieftaincy. The institution by its functions is to engender participatory democracy, good governance and social protection despite the fact that its hereditary nature is sometimes considered undemocratic. Despite these dialectic perceptions, the institution has remained intact although it has gone through several paradigm shifts during both the colonial and post-independence eras of Ghana. In recent times, since Ghana's 1992 Republican Constitution, the institution has been divorced from the local government administration except for limited consultative and advisory roles. These roles of the chieftaincy institution need to be

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