CHIEFTAINCY, DIASPORA, AND DEVELOPMENT: THE INSTITUTION OF NKɔSUOHENE IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT
This article is about the institution of the Nkɔsuohene/hemaa and how it relates to African Americans. The Nkɔsu stool was created in 1985 by the late Asantehene, Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, as a catalyst for development in Kumase and beyond. Since the 1990s, hundreds of African Americans and some white Westerners have been honoured with various royal titles. Do African Americans understand the Akan conception of slavery and a person of slave origins? Conversely, is the diasporan concept of slavery understood by Akans? In general, and using the case of the Nkɔsuohene/hemaa, this article sets out to show how fluid the chieftaincy institution is in Ghana. Its continuous importance is seen in the development agenda that it has adopted to serve new needs and aspirations. The article makes a case for African Americans to look beyond the Akan regions of Ghana in search of their roots, and argues that such studies can advance understanding of slavery and its legacies in Ghana.

SINCE THE CALL BY KWAME NKRUMAH FOR DESCENDANTS OF THE Middle Passage1 to return ‘home’ and assist in the development of the first ‘Black’ nation south of the Sahara to break off the colonial chains, many diasporan Africans have made Ghana their home. Over the years they have come to Ghana as tourists, employees, investors, and ‘returnees’.2 Some have been given lands for resettlement by traditional authorities, and others have been installed as chiefs and queen mothers. The focus of this article is on the latter case. The concept of the Nkɔsuohene, which came into being in 1985, was created and promoted by the late Asantehene Otumfuo

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1. Used here to refer to all descendants of African slaves.
Opoku Ware II (1970–99). From its beginnings in Asante, the Nk\textsuperscript{suohene} phenomenon has spread like wildfire within the Akan territories and beyond, and, since the 1990s, hundreds of the black ‘returnees’ and some white Westerners (Americans, British, Germans, Dutch, and others) have been honoured with various royal titles. The Western media have been fascinated with the latter group particularly.

The article is in three parts. The first examines the institution of the Nk\textsuperscript{suohene}, focusing on the relationship between chieftaincy, culture, and development. The second section first discusses the processes that led to the birth of the African American identity in North America, the Caribbean, and South America, before turning to Ghanaian chieftaincy’s attempt to reincorporate people of African descent. What does a so-called royal title mean to an African of diasporan origin? Do diasporan Africans understand the Akan conception of slavery and of persons of slave origins? And conversely, do the Akans understand the idea of the Diaspora? The complex (and often contradictory) set of uses for which the Nk\textsuperscript{suuo} stool is employed and Asanteman (the Asante state) reactions to the institution are considered. In general, and using two case studies of the Nk\textsuperscript{suohene} of Ada, Isaac Hayes, and the Nk\textsuperscript{suohemaa} of Konkonuru, Rita Marley, the article reveals the fluidity of chieftaincy in Ghana. Its continuous importance is seen in the development agenda that it has adopted to serve new needs and aspirations. The article also makes a case for diasporan Africans to look beyond the Akan regions of Ghana in search of their roots, and argues that such studies can advance understanding of slavery and its legacies in Ghana.

The article originates from interviews conducted with ten diasporan Africans resident in Ghana\textsuperscript{3} and ten traditional authorities (chiefs and elders), as well as residents of communities with Nk\textsuperscript{suuo} stools. The focus is on the Akan areas because of the origins of the concept within that culture, but my investigations also explored other cultural areas of Ghana where relevant. The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana, Article 270 (3b) enjoins traditional councils to ‘establish and operate a procedure for the registration of chiefs and the public notification in the Gazette or otherwise of the status of persons as chiefs in Ghana’. All enstoolment and enskinment are therefore to be gazetted by the Regional Houses of Chiefs. However, most Nk\textsuperscript{suuo} stools are not recorded, and although the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture is attempting to gazette all Nk\textsuperscript{suuo} stools there are presently no official records. Because of this handicap, the study surveyed three Ghanaian daily newspapers (Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times and Mirror), the Ghana News Agency (GNA), and other electronic sources.

\textsuperscript{3} All interviewees are members of either the African-American Association of Ghana (AAAG), citizens of the United States, or the Ghana Caribbean Association (GCA), whose membership includes all Caribbean nationals and persons of Caribbean descent in Ghana, including those of British, Spanish, French and Dutch heritage.
for information on the installation of an Nk\textsuperscript{suohene/hemaa} or development projects undertaken by them. The search through the dailies covered the period 1985 to the present. Furthermore, some secondary sources such as memoirs of African Americans have been used. For the purposes of this article, African Americans\textsuperscript{4} are defined as the descendants of the black slaves in North and South America, including the Caribbean. I do not pretend that this label is acceptable to all, nor have I explored the important and difficult question of the relationship between black North Americans, Caribbean people and black South Americans.

\textit{Chieftaincy and development}

Chieftaincy is an indigenous system of governance with executive, judicial, and legislative powers. The history of chieftaincy in Ghana is one of evolutionary tenacity and contradictions, but not refusal of change. It survived the exploitative British imperialism of the nineteenth century and has endured both civilian and military post-Independence regimes. Its endurance must be viewed within the larger political economy of Ghana. Eighty percent of land in Ghana is held by the various traditional authorities in trust for the subjects of the stool/skin in accordance with customary law, and central government has 10 percent for public development. Chieftaincy has come to serve two major functions: statutory (settlement of chieftaincy disputes and the codification of customary laws) and non-statutory (socio-economic development).\textsuperscript{5} Chiefs are the custodians of the resources within their various communities. In resource-endowed areas, as is the case with most of the stools in southern Ghana, chiefs exploit the resources for the general good of their communities. Development may be seen in several ways. It may be the clearing of bushy paths or the provision of basic amenities such as drinking water, health centres, schools, and electricity. In trying to provide these basic socio-economic necessities chiefs either mobilize the material and human resources of their various local and expatriate communities, or approach non-governmental agencies for assistance. More recently, chiefs have identified diasporan Africans as a potential source of assistance for their development agendas. But mobilizing and seeking resources to undertake development projects in their various communities are not recent phenomena but aspects of a role Ghanaian chiefs have played since pre-colonial times.

\textsuperscript{4} Technically it is correct to refer to all blacks of slave origin on the continents of North and South America, including the Caribbean, as African Americans. The term originated, however, in the US. See Jennifer V. Jackson and Mary E. Cothran, ‘Black versus black: the relationships among African, African American, and African Caribbean persons’, \textit{Journal of Black Studies} \textbf{33}, 5 (2003), pp. 576–604.

The dominant concept of development — based on the idea of human progress, with the broad aim of increasing the standard of living of people as a whole, a notion whose ownership has been claimed and hijacked by the West — has been practised by Ghanaian kings, chiefs, and queens for generations. Perhaps what is ‘new’ is that chiefs are employing very innovative and seemingly modern means to achieve this goal. It was in the spirit of providing for the material and non-materials needs of subjects within Asanteman’s jurisdiction that the late Asantehene Opoku Ware II in 1985 created the Nkɔsu stool division in Kumase. The developmental challenges facing Ghana are monumental. Traditional authorities, as leaders of their various communities, have joined the nation’s development bandwagon as partners. Some have independently initiated several development projects. Traditional leaders re-invent themselves and their offices by promoting development for their various communities. Many chiefs have embarked on a new paradigm for chieftaincy, which is reshaping the institution in a manner that challenges its present ethos. A good number of chiefs are taking up the challenges of the twenty-first century, tackling very modern issues as diverse as children’s rights, the environment, women’s rights, and HIV/AIDS. These leaders perceive initiating development processes as their primary role today.

In a recent study, Arhin Brempong and Mariano Pavanello interviewed four paramount chiefs and documented developments undertaken in their various communities. The development initiatives included an oil palm plantation, mills for oil palm, palm kernel, and shea butter, the Dormaa brick and tile factory, health clinics, and schools. The Okyeuhene (chief of Akim Abuakwa) has instituted many anti-deforestation measures, which are aimed at protecting the forested areas of Okyeman and beyond. Apart from speaking on issues of national interest such as accountability and good governance, the Okyeuhene in 2000 became the first traditional leader to jog publicly and to undergo a medical test for HIV before his people.

A pre-eminent example is Otumfuo Osei Tutu II. Since his enstoolment as Asantehene some ten years ago, he has initiated a number of development projects aimed at eradicating poverty and underdevelopment in the country. Prominent among these projects was the establishment of the Otumfuo Educational Fund (OTEFund) in 2000. The main objective of the fund is to assist needy students and other deprived educational institutions, particularly in Asanteman and generally in Ghana. The OTEFund is accessible to all, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds. This is a measure of the fluidity in the chieftaincy institution in Ghana, where chiefs have retained their status as traditional leaders, but now have a large say in development initiatives via international donors both large and small.

Historical context: the institution of Nkɔsuohene/hemaa

Traditional stools are not rigid or fixed portfolios; new ones are constantly being created and old ones modified as the situation demands. Barfuо Abayie Boaten conceptualized the framework within which the Nkɔsu chiefship functions: Nkɔsu is an Asante Twi word and it literally means ‘progress or sustained development’.\(^7\) Ohene or Ohemaa in Twi translate as chief and queen mother respectively, and the same linguistic rule applies throughout the Akan cultures. Nkɔsuohene therefore literally means ‘development chief’ and Nkɔsuohemaa is ‘development queen mother’. Boaten traces the origins of the concept to 1985, with the creation of the Kumase division by the late king, who was desirous to see economic developments replicated not only within Asanteman, but throughout Ghana. He thus directed all Amanhene and Abrempon (sub-divisions of the Asante state) to create their own Nkɔsu stools and appoint to them. An Nkɔsuohene/hemaa should be an accomplished individual, one with the power to mobilize the resources of the community ‘both physical and human’ for the advancement of such a community. Boaten further states that it was not the responsibility of the Nkɔsuohene/hemaa to execute development projects single-handedly. The key concept here is full community participation and approval of whatever development is intended. For Tom McCaskie the title has been used in Asante ‘to describe responsible advancement through combined or communal effort’. He adds that the stool was instituted by the late Asantehene Opoku Ware II to commemorate his reign, as is required of every Asantehene. The first Asante citizen to be honoured with an Nkɔsu stool was the wealthy businessman E. K. Osei, with the stool name Nana Osei Nkwantabisa.\(^8\) McCaskie’s discussion of the Nkɔsuohene/hemaa concept in relation to Africans from the diaspora is illuminating:

In private many Asante chiefs angrily mock Africans from the diaspora who think they have somehow returned home and been reintegrated because they wear cloth, speak greetings in Twi and buy Nkosuo stools. Painful though it is to say, and no one seems willing to say it, many Asante office holders regard returnees from the diaspora as the unwellcome descendants of slaves, as well as being people who proclaim themselves to be African but all too often behave like stereotypical ‘ugly Americans’.\(^9\)

When McCaskie, one of the most prolific and influential scholars of Asante, makes such an assertion, it must be considered carefully. Do African Americans ‘buy Nkɔsu stools’? The evidence for this assertion by Asante chiefs with regard to diasporan Africans is rather shallow. However, in a recent study, ‘African American psychologists, the Atlantic slave trade and

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Ghana: a history of the present', McCaskie's interest in the subject becomes clearer. He examines the work of African American academics who have occupied *Nkṣuohene* stools in some communities and argues that Ghanaian chiefs initiate developments projects, extending an invitation to the African Americans to play a supportive role. The processes leading to the installation of an *Nkṣuohene/hemaa* are in most cases initiated locally or abroad by Ghanaians. As will be illustrated below through the two case studies, it is revealing that most *Nkṣuohene/hemaa* have been individuals who initially came as tourists, but later fell in love with the country; some have returned and settled in Ghanaian communities. Further, it is important to state that some Asante citizens who reside in the West court the friendship of wealthy African Americans and most probably extend a romanticized idea of African royalty in Asante. African Americans may be ‘sold’ a dilapidated school structure in some rural community, the dire need for a health facility, or generally high poverty levels in the ‘motherland’. Such appeals touch the conscience of diasporan Africans. Those with disposable incomes will usually respond by visiting Ghana. At this point, the unfree origin of diasporan Africans is not an issue. Most are welcomed with pomp and pageantry; the issue of their unfree origins is only discussed privately.

It is important to note in this context that the Asante are extremely secretive about an individual's ancestry. Emmanuel Akyeampong and Pashington Obeng write that ‘Asante proverbs like *obi nkyere obi ase* (no one should point to other people’s [non-Asante/unfree] origins) emphasize the concept of wealth in people and Asante assimilativeness.’ McCaskie also makes this point clear when he notes, in relation to the affairs of Nkawie, that according to the historical record Asantehene Opoku Ware I ‘fined Bantama as it had spoken to reveal the origins of Nkawie which was forbidden by custom’. According to McCaskie, it was strictly forbidden in Asante law and custom to mention the origins of another person publicly. This prohibition was among the laws of Komfo Anokye, and it has remained to the present. Almost all the personalities McCaskie discusses in his paper are highly educated, high-income professionals. The installation of high-profile people as *Nkṣuohene/hemaa* in Ghana has been widely reported. Although official numbers are not known, many African Americans and white Westerners have been installed as chiefs and queen mothers since historian

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John Henrik Clarke back in the 1970s. Other prominent African American chiefs and queen mothers include academics such as Asa Hilliard III (Nana Baffour Amankwatia II), Wade Nobles (Nana Kwaku Berko I), Molefi Asante (Nana Okru Asante Peasah), Na’im Akbar (Nana Osei Nkwantabisa III), and Leonard Jeffries (Nana Kwaku Dua Agyeman III); musicians like Rita Marley (Nana Akua Adobea I), Joseph Constantine Hill (Nana Osae Kwame I), Isaac Hayes (Nene Katey Ocansey I), and Stevie Wonder; and an assortment of others, like the Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jnr (Nii Afotey Oblum II), business executive Willie Edward Carrington (Nana Osei Mensah), and Washington mayor Anthony Williams (Nana Kwadwo Amissah II). Table 1 presents some further details.

Behind every traditional stool or skin is a powerful deity. Thus an Asante’s installation process cannot be complete without the king-elect swearing the Ntam Kese oath. The political system within the Akan culture areas is dual or gendered. The social organization in all Akan societies is based on matrilineal descent. Thus for every ohene (king or chief), there is an ohemaa (literally, female ruler or queen mother). The queen mother is the co-ruler and has joint responsibility with the king for all affairs of the state.

This important constitutional role of the queen mother is underpinned by the Asante political organization in which the ohemaa adwa (queen mother’s stool) is the akonnua panyin, the senior stool in relation to the ohene adwa (king’s stool). And when the two very important personalities sit in state together (especially during state festivals or other rituals), the ohene is seated to the right of the ohemaa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnic background</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Stool/skin name</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Year of installation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Church minister</td>
<td>Nii Afotey Oblum II</td>
<td>Katamanso</td>
<td>Greater Accra</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Hassel-Thompson</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>New York Senator</td>
<td>Nana Addobea</td>
<td>Akumamu</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Hayes</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>Nene Katey Ocansey I</td>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>Greater Accra</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Constantine Hill</td>
<td>African Caribbean</td>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>Nana Osae Kwame I</td>
<td>Aburi</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Williams</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Mayor of Washington</td>
<td>Nana Kwadwo Amissah II</td>
<td>Edina</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by the author, based on newspaper clippings and electronic sources.
The illustration that follows is a description of the installation of an Akan chief. Arhin argues that rituals embody both beliefs and rites. The rituals that are of concern to me here are those of enstoolment within the Akan traditional political systems. These rituals ‘vary with the type of political organization, in particular with the categories of societies with or without centralized authority systems’.  

Akan rituals are rooted in their religion and political organization. The description of the installation process of an indigenous Akan ruler, male or female, will enable us to situate the Nkɔstuo stool in its proper context. We may begin with Arhin’s description of the process after a suitable candidate is found in the event of death or destoolment.

After the selection [of an Akan ruler], a day was appointed on which he was taken into the stool room and, as it were, shown to the ancestors. Blindfold, he was made to select one of the stools, the name of whose occupant he was to be bear. He was then brought into close contact by the principal subordinate stool-holders with the first blackened stool, that is, the stool of the first occupant of the office he was to assume. His body was sacralised, imbued with the spirit of the founder of the stool, and he became certified as the one who sat on the stool of so-and-so. With sanctification, he had to observe certain taboos. His bare foot should not touch the ground, so that spare sandals had to be carried by attendants when he went out; he could not strike or be struck; he also had to avoid certain foods and meat, regarded as hateful to the ancestral spirits.

The above description applies to the ohene (male ruler). The Akan ohemaa was, and continues to be, chosen by her senior lineage mates, both female and male. The ohemaa has never been chosen by the reigning king. Rather, she is the figurehead who historically is principally responsible for the selection of the candidate when a stool becomes vacant either through death or destoolment.

**Chieftaincy and the re-incorporation of people of African descent**

All centralized states that emerged in present-day Ghana were directly or indirectly linked with slavery and the Atlantic slave trade from the 1550s to the 1800s. The coastal and forest zone states, such as those of the Ga, Anlo, Fante, Akyem, Akwamu, and Asante, played diverse roles as far as slavery and the slave trade were concerned. Centralized savannah states like the Dagomba, Gonja and Wala were also indirectly linked, but all the same played a very important complementary role. Chieftaincy involvement in slavery is well documented and a discussion here is not necessary. In

1836, a group of about seventy Afro-Brazilians of seven different families disembarked from the SS Salisbury on the Gold Coast.22 These were freed slaves sent by the American Colonization Society, a group representing diverse interests with some private, state, and federal support.23 All Brazilian slaves were emancipated by an imperial decree on 13 May 1888.24 Brazil received the greatest number of slaves, although estimates vary widely: for example, Brazilian historian J. P. Calogeras argues that at least 18 million were carried to Brazil; Arthur Ramos, another Brazilian scholar, put the total number at not more than five million.25 A third scholarly source asserts that Brazil received an estimated four million Africans between the 1550s and 1867. According to Amos and Ayesu this number represented 40.6 percent of the entire ‘consignment’ that landed in the Americas.26 Whatever the actual number of Africans imported, most authorities appear to agree that Brazil received the largest number of enslaved Africans. The return of the Afro-Brazilians to Africa is linked to the Bahia slave revolts of 1835.

The Afro-Brazilians are known in Accra as the Tabon. The Portuguese-speaking Afro-Brazilians on arrival used expressions such as ‘Como está?’ (How are you?), to which the reply was ‘Tá bom’, a phrase also used to salute their hosts, the Ga people.27 Schaumloeffel argues that the returnees certainly used the term ‘tá bom’ as a confirmation and as a question.28 The constant use of the expression ‘tá bom’ by the returnees was reciprocated by the Ga, and thus became their name. The Tabon were incorporated into the Ga-speaking society through the Otublohum quarter,29 and according to Dakubu, there is no evidence that they maintained their Luso language into a second generation.30 Even though part of the Ga, they were given their own stool and they have also maintained their distinct identity (reflected in

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22. The literature on the Afro-Brazilian return to Africa is very wide, but for specific history readers can refer to the most recent scholarship: Marco Aurelio Schaumloeffel, Tabom: The Afro-Brazilian community in Ghana (Lulu.Com, Barbados, 2008); Akione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayesu, “I am Brazilian”: history of the Tabon, Afro-Brazilians in Accra, Ghana’, Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana (New Series) 6 (2002), pp. 35–58.
24. Ibid.
27. Schaumloeffel, Tabom, p. 17.
28. Ibid.
29. The Ga traditional state has seven divisions or quarters, of which Otublohum is one.
names such as Aruna, Nassu, Azumah) and have their own chief, known as Tabon Mantse (chief). The grant of their own stool and some land to accompany it was the first such development within the larger Ga society. The returnees possessed certain skills that made their presence beneficial, as they were skilled in architecture, carpentry, blacksmithing, goldsmithing, and tailoring, as well as farming, when they arrived in Jamestown, Accra.

Fihankra: atonement for the role of Ghanaian chiefs in the slave trade

At dawn on 9 December 1994, a bull and a sheep were slaughtered in Bukom Square. The collected blood was to be used for a very important religious ritual. Assembled in the forecourt of the Jamestown Mantse Palace were several Ghanaian traditional leaders led by Nana Odura Nemapau, President of the National House of Chiefs. Others included Nii Adote Obuor, Sempe Mantse, Nii Kpobi Tete Tsuru, La Mantse, and Prophet K. O. K. Onyioha, spiritual head of the Godian Religion based in Nigeria.31 Leading this solemn ceremony was Numo Tete, the Nai Wulomo (chief priest of the Ga state), who was assisted by other priests and priestesses. A ‘purification of the stools and skins’ of Ghana was performed. Sacred water was sprinkled at James and Ussher Forts. This was an atonement ceremony for the participation of Ghanaian chiefs in the slave trade. The process was witnessed by some diasporan Africans and Nana Nemapau explained that the ‘purification of the stools and skins was meant to make blacks in the diaspora to feel wanted and cherished among Ghanaians’.32

In addition to its religious significance the ceremony of purification was also to mark the official opening of the first Pan African Historical Arts and Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) in Ghana. With official forgiveness and lengthy speeches by traditional authorities and politicians alike, there needed to be a true and practical akwaaba (Twi for ‘welcome’) for the descendants of the Middle Passage. They needed to be given a piece of the ancestral homeland. Akwamu, the ‘predatory state’ of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, responded appropriately by allocating 30,000 acres of land to the returnees in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It is known as the Fihankra International (Twi, literally ‘circular house’ or ‘compound house’).33 Fihankra is an Akan adinkra architectural symbol. The Fihankra symbol marks the Akan concept which reinforces the idea of close family ties and unity. It was after the ceremony of atonement referred to earlier that an African from the diaspora, Nana Kwadwo Oluwale Akpan, formerly Gerald L. Simmons Jr (1944–2008), was enstooled as Chief, the Ye Fa Ogyamu

32. Ibid.
of the *Fihankra* community. In 1995 the Akwamu Traditional Council handed over the 30,000 acres allocated to the *Fihankra* community. The stated mission of *Fihankra* is ‘promoting the cultural and economic reintegration of Africa by its diaspora’. The *Fihankra* stool, unlike other stools of southern Ghana, is dual in nature (both stool and skin) and practises a patrilineal system of inheritance. This is a contradiction that needs more elaboration. All traditional political polities south of the Black Volta sit on stools and those north of the Black Volta sit on the skins of animals. Succession to an Akan stool is based on matrilineal affiliation. One can conjecture that the stool/skin duality is based on the historical facts – the African diasporans did not originate from any one particular traditional polity; slaves were obtained from all corners of Ghana, west, east, south, and north. Without DNA tests, returnees cannot trace their ancestry to any one particular community and thus it is appropriate to have a blend of the two dominant symbols of traditional authority incorporated into the *Fihankra* concept.

The *Fihankra* project is thus a perfect example of African culture at its most useful, enabling the re-integration of descendants of the Middle Passage. However, the project has not been unproblematic. The 30,000 acres of land, part of which has been developed and settled, was given by the late *Akwamuhene*, but his successor, Nana Appiah Nti, seems to view the grant in a different light. Traditional rituals have been evoked, unfortunately, because the purification ceremony referred to earlier signified and acknowledged diasporan Africans as sons and daughters of the land. The first chief of *Fihankra*, Nana Akpan, passed away on 30 May 2008 on the soil of Ghana’s eastern neighbour, the Republic of Togo, where he had travelled. According to Ghanaian customs, the body should have been brought back and interred in the soils of the *Fihankra* that Nana Akpan called home. But Nana Appiah Nti and some of his supporters refused permission for the return of Nana Akpan’s body. Permission for burial was sought from the Traditional Council but was turned down because of several

36. I thank Kwame Shabazz Zulu of Harvard University for many discussions on and around the matters related to the *Fihankra* community discussed in this section.
unresolved issues over the land on which Fihankra settlement is located. Allowing burial would imply recognition of Nana Akpan as the sovereign of Fihankra. A memorial service was held for Nana Akpan on 2 August 2008 at his palace in the Fihankra Township, however. The service was attended by African Americans and Ghanaians. The National House of Chiefs was represented by its president, Odenehu Gyapong Ababio II and his retinue.

The Tabon and Fihankra experience in the Ghanaian development context

The relevance of the discussion of the Tabon and Fihankra in this article must be seen in the context of diasporan Africans’ attempt at re-integration. The two cases have similarities and dissimilarities within the chieftaincy institution. One important distinction for the Tabon, for example, is that they have been more or less completely integrated into Ga society over several generations. African American Nkɔsuohene/hemaa are not assimilated in this way. Similarly, the Ye Fa Ogyem (Fihankra) township residency is strictly limited to African Americans, which, as some African Americans and Ghanaians have pointed out, contradicts the avowed aim of reintegrating African Americans into Ghanaian society.

The Nkɔsu stool was created with community development as its main objective. The Nkɔsuohene/hemaa is theoretically a development initiator whose aim is to mobilize the community to undertake projects. The stool has been abused in several ways. For some sub-chiefs the presence of any Westerner in their community is the opportune time to offer the Nkɔsu stool to such a person, and these discrepancies merit further examination. The Western media have shown a lot of interest in the installation of these African ‘kings’ and ‘queens’ and one wonders what the basis of this fascination is. News abounds in Western dailies of the installation of foreigners as Nkɔsuohene/hemaa. A news item in the UK tabloid, The Sun, proclaims ‘Brit pair to rule in Ghana’. John Lawler was installed as Nkɔsuohene of Shia

38. Lands for development in the area where Fihankra is situated are very expensive; the problem is basically one of ownership. Even J. J. Rawlings, three times head of state of the Republic, could not escape the hazards and vagaries of the landlord-tenant relationship. Former President Rawlings negotiated and paid for six plots of land at the cost of 236 million from Kronti Adontehene, Akwamufie on 30 March 2002. Less than a year later, his landlord Nana Ansah Prem III, chief of Kyease Akosombo, served him notice forbidding him from entering the land. See The Chronicle, 24 and 28 November 2003, and 5 and 11 December 2003.
41. The Sun online, <http://www.thesun.co.uk/article/0, 2006310780,00.html> (10 March 2007).
(with the stool name Torbui Mottey I) and Elaine Lawler as Nkɔsuohemaa (Mama Amenyo Nyowu Sika). Another headline, in the UK Telegraph, drew attention to ‘Africans still waiting for “chief” Geldof’s help’. In 2004, Bob Geldof, the Irish rock star turned Africa campaigner, visited the town of Ajumako-Bisease in the Central Region of Ghana and was promptly installed as an Nkɔsuohene with the stool name Nana Kofi Kumasah I. In Sir Bob’s case the installation was captured on film for his Geldof in Africa TV series, broadcast on BBC Television in 2005.

The honour of an Nkɔsuohene/hemaa is often misunderstood by white Westerners. For instance, in 2004 when Geldof was so honoured, he accepted the responsibilities that came with the post. But after using the ‘crowning’ ceremony as a photo opportunity for his documentary series, made in the run-up to the 2005 Live 8 concerts, Geldof somehow forgot all about the Ghanaian town – as its people pointed out in their counter-documentary, A Letter to Geldof. Nana Okofo Kwakora Gyan III, who installed Geldof in 2004, after waiting for the Nkɔsuohene to no avail, followed him to London. Nana was surprised to see that he and other elders who had posed for a photograph with Geldof were featured in the book that accompanied the Geldof in Africa TV series, sold at £16 a copy. ‘I didn’t know we would be sold in London,’ he says.

In another case in Gomoa Bewuadze, Central Region, the British national Roger Gillman was installed as the Nkɔsuohene of Mankoadze without the knowledge of the paramount chief, Nana Obambir Egyir IV. Nana Egyir, who is the head of the royal clan of Mankoadze, only learnt about the installation when Gillman turned up to discuss a library complex project for the town. ‘The “white” chief was dressed in traditional cloth, with some retinue following him with a stool.’ Gillman was asked to send his stool home because in Ghanaian traditional custom a chief does not need to carry his stool when invited by his fellow chief to his palace. Westerners view Nkɔsu stools from their cultural perspective and this sometimes conflicts with how chiefs see them – principally as development initiators.  

44. Ibid.
45. See ‘Confusion, as another foreigner is enstooled . . . Chiefs advised against indiscriminate enstoolment of foreigners,’ Ghana News Agency, 8 May 2005.
46. Ibid.
47. Interview, Nana Addo Mensah II, chief of Konkonuru, Konkonuru, Eastern Region, 13 August 2008.
a traditional stool would mean very little to a white Westerner, for diasporan Africans, the honour of an Nk\textsuperscript{suohene}/hemaa is more spiritual. Upon being enstooled as a Ghanaian sub-chief or queen mother for development, these Africans from the diaspora are reintegrated back into the ancient clan system of chieftaincy. The honours are also significant for many reasons, as they acknowledge the excellent leadership that these recipients provide to their chosen communities.

The Asanteman Council and the Ghanaian Parliament have been very concerned about what has become a habit at community festivals where foreigners are installed as Nk\textsuperscript{suohene}/hemaas. The traditionalists are concerned about the denigration of Asante norms and traditions, which, they argue, undermines the authority of the chieftaincy institution. In principle, however, the Asanteman Council is not against the concept; the concern is the uses to which the stools are put by non-indigenous Nk\textsuperscript{suohenes}. For example, it is alleged that some occupants of the stools have acted in their capacities as development chiefs in poverty-stricken Ghana to solicit for funds and other development aid in the names of deprived communities, but never delivered.

\textit{Case study of development projects of an Nk\textsuperscript{suohene}/hemaa}

What does it mean to be an Nk\textsuperscript{suohene}/hemaa? The answer is in the title. In accepting the title of Nk\textsuperscript{suohene}, Nk\textsuperscript{suohemaa}, Mpumtuohene, or Mpumtuohemaa, one is expected by the community that bestows such an honour to lead them in mobilizing resources for development.\textsuperscript{48} The Nk\textsuperscript{suohene}/hemaa job is essentially to help in promoting the progress of a community. The rationale for any enstoolment involving diasporan Africans is carefully explained to them. They are told the responsibilities of the stool.\textsuperscript{49} What follows below is a case study of two areas with diasporan Africans as their Nk\textsuperscript{suohene}/hemaa. The areas studied are Konkonuru in the Eastern Region and Ada in the Greater Accra Region.

After Bob [Marley] passed, I travelled to Ethiopia, which for me was very special, a dream come true, like putting a foot in heaven's door. I was even able to leave a piece of his locks there. But when it came time for me to find a place to settle in Africa, \textit{where I might have a home and a purpose}, Ghana was the country that opened its heart and its arms. Its stable government was attractive, as well as its embrace of development.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{48} Interview, Opanin Kwaku Adae, Nana Osei Kwame, Akua Bompata, Joseph Boateng, Konkonuru, Eastern Region, 13 August 2008.

\textsuperscript{49} Interview, Nana Addo Mensah II, Opanin Kojo Mensah, Konkonuru, Eastern Region, 13 August 2008.

\textsuperscript{50} Rita Marley, \textit{No Woman, No Cry: My life with Bob Marley} (Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 2004), p. 197, emphasis mine.
In 1998 Rita Marley, wife of Reggae legend Bob Marley, bought a property near Aburi and according to her any time she passed the nearby village of Konkonurú to her property, the underdeveloped nature of the village, with school pupils taking lessons under rundown structures, reminded her of Trench Town. ‘As I drove past, I noticed the children sitting on the dirt floor. They had no desks, no seats; the teacher had a chair and little table.’\textsuperscript{51} Faced with the daily reminder of a society in great need, Mrs Marley enquired about how best she could assist the community. Without any royal title, she registered the Rita Marley Foundation (RMF) as a non-governmental organization in 2000, and adopted the village of Konkonurú.\textsuperscript{52}

Konkonurú village is located on the Akwapim Mountains. It is reached by a branch road which leaves the main Accra–Aburi road a few kilometres west of the main Aburi town. It has undulating landscape, part of it on the imposing mountain range. The inhabitants are mostly farmers and petty traders. The community, even though close to the national capital, lacks several basic necessities of life. For Nana Addo Mensah II and his people, Rita Marley’s choice of the village as her home in Ghana was God-sent. Rita Marley was enstooled as the \textit{Nk\textsubscript{suohemaa}} of Konkonurú in 2000, under the stool name Nana Akua Adobea I.

The \textit{Nk\textsubscript{suohemaa}}, working through her foundation, has been able to mobilize the community to execute many projects, and the Foundation has endowed the village with many resources. In collaboration with the chief, \textit{Nk\textsubscript{suohene}},\textsuperscript{53} and central government, the roads in the village have all been paved and lined with functional street lights. Other executed projects include the provision of clean drinking water, a community hall, learning aids, additional schools, a health care centre, and a modern recording studio (Tuff Gong) equipped with recording facilities and equipment.\textsuperscript{54} The clinic donated by the Rita Marley Foundation to the community has been used by the local health nurses for outreach campaigns and could in the future serve as a permanent home to a dedicated community nurse. The clinic has served as a base for visiting diasporan physicians and other paramedics. The Los Angeles-based Integrative Clinics International has partnered with the Rita Marley Foundation to organize ‘health fairs’ for the local people. In August 2007 over 200 community members were screened for high blood pressure and diabetes, as these conditions are on the rise in Ghana. Treatments were offered where appropriate and life-threatening medical cases were referred to the Korle-Bu teaching hospital in Accra for further diagnoses.

In 1992 the soul musician Isaac Hayes was enstooled as the \textit{Nk\textsubscript{suohene}} of Big Ada by the Kabiawe Division, in the Dangme East District of the

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{53} The \textit{Nk\textsubscript{suohene}} of Konkonurú is a Ghanaian Lebanese businessman.
\item\textsuperscript{54} Interview, Osae Bredu, Assemblyman, Konkonurú, Eastern Region, 13 August 2008.
\end{itemize}
Greater Accra Region. Probably he was the first diasporan African to occupy the stool in the Ada traditional area. Ada, or Big Ada as it is known in the historical records, is some 96 km to the east of Accra. It is reached by the main Accra–Aflao road. The community is best known for its salt-mining industry. The salt miners’ lives revolve around the Songhor Lagoon. The people mine salt in the dry season, between January and April, and farm in the rainy season from May to December. In the arid flatlands of Ada, both men and women wade knee-high into salt ponds, scraping out the rough, granular salt into piles. These are packed into sacks for the market. Since his enstoolment as Nene Katey Ocansey I in 1992, Isaac Hayes has mobilized the community to execute development projects. He started the Isaac Hayes Foundation (IHF) in 1993 and in 2000 the Foundation built an 8,000 square-foot educational facility. The NEKO TECH centre provides literacy, computer technology and health courses to underprivileged boys and girls from the community.

The developments undertaken by the Nk3wuohene/hemaa are probably limited to southern Ghana. About 1,000 African Americans live and work in Ghana, mainly in Accra, and the country annually attracts about 10,000 black Americans as tourists. Information on African diasporans adopting communities in northern Ghana was not available at the time of writing. However, some northern chiefdoms have from time to time honoured foreign personalities who through their work have contributed to ‘poverty alleviation’ – this could be in the provision of resources ranging from drinking water to micro-finance. But here the traditional title is in direct relation to the service rendered. The Governor-General of Canada, Michaëlle Jean, was enskinned in December 2006 by the chiefs and people of Golingu community in the Tolon-Kumbungu District, Northern Region. Her skin name is Paga Naa (Dagbani for women’s chief). For the enskinment rituals, Governor-General Jean was presented with ‘kola nuts, a traditional cloth, and was ushered into the durbar ground amidst drumming and dancing (Dumba dance), a dance designated for royals’. The Paga Naa’s responsibilities include presiding over the women in the community and championing their cause.

The process of re-integration into the various African societies has a direct correlation with state power and level of economic advancement. Even
though the ‘back to Africa movement’ was once championed by Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican, it is the middle-class African Americans who have responded. It is the black Americans, backed by American dollars, who are capable of embarking on a trip to Africa in search of their roots.

Conclusion

In an era when central government has fortified the development role of the state and has sublet that vital role to so-called Western development experts and to multinational corporations, it is refreshing that indigenous governance systems are reshaping themselves to complement the development role of the state. This article has explored the interplay of chieftaincy, culture, and development. It showed how the cultural stool (Nkɔsuɔ) has become a catalyst for development in some Ghanaian communities. The two case studies illustrate how occupants of the stools mobilized their chosen communities in undertaking development projects. It is abundantly clear that the two case studies are not extreme cases but generally fall within the scope of the traditional notions and expectation of the stool occupants. It has been argued that development is not new as far as the chieftaincy institution is concerned. In fact chiefship implies development, and any occupant of a traditional stool is judged on the tangible and intangible resources that they can bring to the community through their stool. The importance of the development role assumed by diasporan Africans cannot be overemphasized. Besides the development dimension of the Nkɔsuɔ stool, it has also played a key role in the re-integration of diasporan Africans into Ghanaian society. Clearly, a complex relationship exists between chieftaincy, culture, and development. Chiefs have emerged as legitimate interlocutors of the central government on behalf of their populations and their development aspirations.