

Migrant Chiefs in Stranger Communities in Ghana: The Challenge of their Inclusion into the Houses of Chiefs

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Abstract

Urbanization spearheaded migratory movements into African towns and cities, while democratization provided migrants the social and political space

<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/contjas.v10i1.5>

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to establish traditional authority in the form of migrant chieftaincy. This paper focuses on this type of chieftaincy; variously called migrant chiefs, Zongo Chiefs, or stranger chiefs in settler communities, and the quest for these chiefs' inclusion into the Houses of Chiefs structure, statutory bodies which are being constitutionally guaranteed. Historical evidence points to the fact that both the colonial and postcolonial state have shown some level of tolerance to migrant chiefs in Ghana. While political leaders, such as the executive arm, have given recognition to these chiefs at various levels, including granting them a complete Ministry, these chiefs still find it difficult to be included as members of the Houses of Chiefs. Using historical and anthropological material, the paper provides the foundation of migrant chieftaincy in Ghana, while utilizing empirical data to analyse how migrants reinvent chieftaincy in the urban centres, and their attempts to incorporate such an institution into the Houses of Chiefs. The paper argues that, having the support of the political leaders of the state is not enough to guarantee migrant chiefs' inclusion into the Houses of Chiefs, and that judicial and legislative policies are equally needed to facilitate the process of inclusion.

Keywords: Migration, Chief, Chieftaincy, Migrant Chiefs, Zongo

Résumé

L'urbanisation a été le fer de lance des mouvements migratoires vers les villes d'Afrique, tandis que la démocratisation a fourni aux migrants l'espace social et politique nécessaire à l'établissement de l'autorité traditionnelle sous la forme d'une chefferie migrante. Cet article se concentre sur ce type de chefferie dont les chefs sont appelés chefs migrants, chefs Zongo ou chefs étrangers dans les communautés de colons et sur la recherche de l'inclusion de ces chefs dans la structure des Chambres des Rois et des Chefs, des organes statutaires garantis par la constitution. Les preuves historiques montrent que les États coloniaux et postcoloniaux ont fait preuve d'une certaine tolérance à l'égard des chefs migrants au Ghana. Bien que les dirigeants politiques, notamment le Pouvoir Exécutif, aient reconnu ces chefs à différents niveaux, notamment en leur accordant un ministère à part entière, ces chefs éprouvent toujours des difficultés à être intégrés dans les Chambres des Rois et des Chefs. S'appuyant sur des données historiques et anthropologiques, l'article pose les bases de la chefferie migrante au Ghana, tout en utilisant des données empiriques pour analyser la manière

dont les migrants réinventent la chefferie dans les centres urbains, et leurs tentatives d'incorporer une telle institution dans les Chambres des Rois et des Chefs. L'article affirme que le soutien des dirigeants politiques de l'État ne suffit pas pour garantir l'inclusion des chefs migrants dans les Chambres des Rois et des Chefs, et que des politiques judiciaires et législatives sont également nécessaires pour faciliter le processus d'inclusion.

Mots clés: sécurité foncière, certificats coutumiers d'occupation des terres, continuum des droits, conflits

Introduction

Urbanization spearheaded migratory movements to African cities while democratization has provided chieftaincy a fertile environment not only to flourish, but also manifest in several forms across Africa. Although its powers, functions and authority have declined over a period, the institution has not become totally insignificant in modern society (Sharma, 2004, p.23). Modernization theorists who had earlier predicted the withering away of chieftaincy on the continent rather witnessed the formal recognition and incorporation of chieftaincy into many newly independent African nation-states. Many years after independence, multi-party democratization and neo-liberal reforms in the 1990s provided the impetus for the resurgence of chieftaincy in Sub-Saharan Africa (Englebert, 2002). This resurgence led to a renewed interest in African chieftaincy, focusing among other things, the role of traditional authorities as new development actors (Kleist, 2011, p. 630). This also led to some chiefs in Africa demanding constitutionally sanctioned powers (Vaughan, 2000, cited in Englebert, 2002, p. 345).

Besides traditional chieftaincy, that has over the years gained academic attention, there is the growth of yet another form of the chieftaincy institution where the chief is a migrant in a stranger community. The growth of African cities and towns has been a function of migration from rural areas to the urban cities (Awumbila et al, 2011), leading to the creation of communities of people without borders in the cities as well as in rural settlements, popularly called Zongos,¹ which were temporal at the onset but gradually became permanent communities. There are records of such settlements in many West African countries in the early time including Ghana, Gao, Djenne, and Timbuktu (Skinner, 1963). In these migrant communities emerged chiefs or headman who represented their followers at the local court (Skinner, 1963p. 308). Variousl

1 For more on Zongos, see (Schildkrout, 1978; Skinner, 1963; Osaghae, 1994; Ntewusu, 2005, 2002, 2012; Pellow, 1999, 2002; Chambas, 1979; Mangin, 1973).

called headmen, Sarkin (or Serikin), or tribal chiefs, the migrant leaders performed several functions in relation to their fellow migrants. They were frequently the first to be sought out by new migrants upon arrival, provided bail in the event a labourer was arrested, helped inform relatives back home in case of death, and buried the deceased (Lentz, 2006 p. 151).

Thus, migrants, as part of their adaptive strategy as well as the need to stay together to deal with the uncertainties of the city, stayed together as a social organization with chieftaincy titles conferred on selected leaders. Sometimes others voluntarily chose their own tribal headmen as chiefs, an indication of their (migrants) desire for representation and protection (Acquah, 1958; Owusu, 2000; Schildkrout, 2006). The tribal headmen also served as justices of peace in conflicts, and collected taxes on behalf of local chiefs (Lentz, 2006 pp. 150–151). They also acted as surrogate fathers to many migrants in various situations such as during contractual marriages between migrants or, migrants and non-migrants (Anamzoya and Baba Zakaria, 2022, p.179). The services of migrant chiefs were not only limited to burying the “parentless dead”, but also adjudicating civil disputes and assisting people in need (Schildkrout, 2006 p. 599). Besides, they functioned as intermediaries between the migrants and the local chiefs, as well as management and district commissioners. By their advice and efforts at reconciliation, tribal chiefs were able to keep many cases out of the courts (Acquah, 1958, p. 101).

The continuous expansion of Greater Accra and Kumasi, as well as other major cities in Ghana has also led to the corresponding installation of various migrant chiefs across the country. Various called migrant chiefs, stranger chiefs, tribal chiefs or tribal headmen, this category of chiefs has created associations, the most popular one being the National Council of Zongo Chiefs (NCZC). This Council is perceived to be an association of migrant chiefs who are largely descendants of emigrants from Ghana’s neighbouring countries in West Africa, as well as those from Ghana’s former British Northern Territories. Based in the capital city of Accra, the NCZC advocate for the collective interest of these chiefs more than the migrants they tend to represent. One of the key concerns of these chiefs is to be part of the state institutions such as the three-tier structure of the Houses of Chiefs in Ghana. This paper thus analyses this special category of chiefs, their efforts, as well as challenges at inclusion into state institutions. The next section presents a conceptual note on integration, which feeds into historical development of migrant chiefs in Ghana, followed by how migrant chieftaincy as a traditional institution is reinvented in an urban

environment. Thereafter, the paper presents the attempts and challenges migrant chiefs face in their resolve to be included in the Houses of Chiefs in Ghana, in spite of the various state recognition granted them. This paper also contributes to new dimensions of chieftaincy in urban Africa, and notions of inclusion and exclusion which subtly hinges on issues of natives and strangers in Africa's urban centres. The paper concludes that while political actors in Ghana have made policies and created ministries and agencies to further recognize and demonstrate tolerance towards migrant chiefs, these chiefs would need further judicial decisions and legislative instruments to facilitate their inclusion into the mainstream state institutions.

Early Headmen in Migrant Communities

The first migrants to have arrived in a host community did not have to fight the indigenes to establish a traditional office, but needed the recognition of the host community, since he is the first person among his ethnic group who has arrived in that part of the country. Upon arrival, the chief of the host community accepted him into the community and recognized him a member of a particular ethnic group. With the passage of time, more migrants joined the first settler to create a community. Naturally, the first migrant becomes a leader of his fellow migrants, with whom the host community and the colonial authority communicated through to the rest of the migrants. Colonial history was handed down to us by early anthropologists and missionaries, as partly evidenced by Bowdich, who for instance, provided an account of one of the early leaders of migrant communities in Kumasi. He had received an information on Dagbon from Muslims residents in Kumasi, including one Bashar or Mohammad al-Ghamba, called Baba, who served as the headman, doubling as Imam of the Moslem community in Kumasi. He had come to Kumasi in 1804 from Mamprugu town of Gambaga and seemed to have been entitled to serve not only the interest of local Muslims in Kumasi, but also in charge of Northern affairs on the council in Kumasi (Weiss, 2001, p. 91). There is a narration of an earliest known religious leader (Imam for the Muslim community) of the Gold Coast, who was called Sharif Abdulai, who concurrently ran the administration of the migrant/Muslim community in Kumasi, with Malam Mama as the political head (headman). When the religious leader died in 1886, Malam Mama assumed religious leadership alongside his political authority until his demise in 1890 (Drekte, 1968, p. 45). Malam Bako was informally recognized as both religious leader and secular leader, but was officially made the Chief Imam later, while Native Officer Ali became headman (Schildkrout, 1997, p. 584). It is clear that at a point in time, religious and political authority were fused in one migrant authority holder, while

in other circumstances, attempts were made to separate the two. Thus, long before effective colonial rule was established in the Gold Coast around 1900 (Nukunya, 2016, p. 140), strangers had already established their own settler/stranger communities/villages (Skinner, 2009, p. 93) in the Gold Coast, with Hausa as the dominant language, as well as the medium of instruction in Quranic education (Odoom, 1971). Most early settler communities were Muslim dominated since they were first established by early Muslim migrants who came in from West African neighbouring countries. In the cities of Accra and Kumasi, the first chiefs to be recognized by the British were these immigrants who were charged with the responsibility over the multi-ethnic stranger communities (Schildkrout, 2006, p. 591). In both cities, the foreign migrants were the dominant groups who had forged closer ties with both the local indigenous rulers and the British colonial administration.

The first decades of colonial rule in the Gold Coast changed the narratives as the period witnessed forced migration through labour recruitment, in the then Northern Territories, which lasted for two decades between the period of 1906 to 1927 (Lentz, 2006, pp. 139–142 in Van de Geest, 2011). Since then, there had been several movements from the north to the south to be part of those who had come from neighbouring West African countries, or create their own settlement in the farming and mining communities. Lack of accommodation, coupled with the desire for migrants to always be with close associates of the same ethnic background resulted in either a permanent or temporary settlement formation, variously called ‘migrant communities,’ squatter settlements/slums, stranger communities, or ‘Mohammadan communities’, with the common one being ‘Zango’, a Hausa word which is also known as Zongo (McIntyre, 2014: 111). Though the terms Zango and Zongo are used to describe Muslim migrant settlements, usage of the latter has gained more prominence in literature. Formation of these stranger communities at the outskirts of the host community was an indication of the failure of inclusion and acculturation of strangers into host communities, and the mental conception of each other as a community, which was more or less congruent to a socio-linguistic unit (Dakubu, 1997, p. 19), in which language became a symbol of social identity (Kuper, 2006, p. 7). With the increasing number of Northern migrants into these migrant communities, subdivisions and additional headmanships were established for smaller groups that ceded from the main migrant community, not physically but administratively. Any tribe with sufficient representation was able to establish

its own Zongo chief (Grindal, 1973, p. 336), which made it less acceptable to have one Sarkin Zongo for all migrants recognized by the British. From Tarkwa in the mid-1930s to Obuasi in the 1950s, such ‘secessions’ were common phenomena (Lentz, 2006, pp. 151–152), with various migrant groups scrambling for formal recognition of their respective leaders, by both the colonial administration and the local indigenous rulers (Pellow, 1997, p. 584).

Available literature points to three popular figures as the first migrants to have arrived in the then Gold Coast from neighbouring countries, to assume leadership positions as migrant leaders, subsequently called Zongo chiefs. They were Naino, Brimah and Officer Ali. Brimah (same as Braimah), as the first migrant chief, in 1902 was recognized by both the Ga, as the host society and the British colonial authorities. Brimah’s position was however not accepted as chief over all migrants but rather “chief of the Muslim community in Accra” (Drekte, 1968, p. 44). For instance, the Hausas who were both Muslims and migrants refused to be headed by Brimah. They proposed Native Officer Ali, thereby wrote to the colonial government ‘requesting Officer Ali to be recognized by the Government as the head of the Hausa community’. This request was approved, and Officer Ali became head of the Hausa community, a position he held till his demise on February 1, 1908 (Drekte, 1968, p. 54; Pellow, 2002, p. 49). While both Brimah and Native Officer Ali had British recognition to rule over their subjects, Mallam Naino (sometimes Nenu) did not get that early explicit recognition although he is reputed to have been the very first immigrant to the Gold Coast and had laid the foundation of the first Zongo in Accra called Zongo Lane, a Hausa community which was developed around 1881 (Pellow, 2002; Ntewusu, 2012). Since that period, various migrant communities have been established as stranger communities, both in the cities and rural areas, with heads representing various ethnic groups. These stranger communities were both geographically and culturally separated by their hosts communities. They were mostly located at the outskirts of the host communities, with Islam as the main religion, and Hausa as the lingua franca. Thus, location, language and religion were three key factors that made inclusion and subsequent integration into the host communities difficult. We therefore frame this paper around the concepts of inclusion and integration, not only as analytical tools to underpin the paper, but also to enhance its understanding in the context of similar studies on traditional authority, migration, urbanization and integration.

This paper forms part of an ongoing study on migrant Chiefs in Accra since 2014. The focus has since been on the migrant chiefs of various socio-cultural imagined communities (without borders) in Accra, and its surrounding communities.

Their numbers keep increasing as more migrant chiefs are installed as the city of Accra expands. The researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with some of the migrant chiefs, including those who form the leadership of their organization, the National Council of Zongo Chiefs. The researchers also had the rarest opportunity to observe the installation process of the Greater Accra Gonja Chief, who is considered the paramount chief (head chief) of all Gonja migrant chiefs in Accra. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with some of the migrant chiefs who attended the installation process. This primary data was complemented by secondary data.

Conceptualizing and Contextualizing Inclusion and Integration

The concept of integration and its cognate notions, like assimilation, acculturation and accommodation, have been continuously used in the social sciences in relation to the phenomenon of immigration and immigrant settlement and inclusion (Holzner, 1967). By far, the most important theories of social inclusion/exclusion in Africa emanate from anthropological and sociological discussions of migration to African cities in general (Cohen, 2019, p. 51). Social inclusion transforms outsiders into insiders by breaking down group boundaries and increasing the capability of migrants to participate in social, economic, political and cultural activities in the receiving society (Puschmann, et al 2015, p. 320). Processes of social inclusion and exclusion are generated by complex set of interactions between migrants and the receiving society, where the argument goes that ‘whether outsiders become insiders is dependent of the agency of migrant within certain social structures (Bourdieu, 1984, in Puschmann et al. 2015, p. 322). Literature suggests that practice of inclusion is much easier in pre-colonial societies compared to the colonial state. Schildkrout (1970) captures this succinctly when she observes that the problems of strangers have been complicated and intensified by the creation of national states. To her, the former British territories had a special definition of ‘native of a territory.’ This lies behind the modern concept of citizenship. ‘Non-natives’ were those whose traditional homelands lay outside the areas of the entity called the state, defined by colonial powers in which they currently live. Thus, notions of citizenship and non-natives come to play when migrants seek inclusion. The fact that periods of political instability intensify non-nativism shows that the concept of nationality is being associated with the concept of ethnic origin,

since the place of birth alone does not confer the status of ‘native’, and people whose ancestors migrated from areas outside Ghana are considered aliens (Schildkrout, 1970, p. 254). Notions of aliens, strangers, and foreigners are terms which are sometimes used interchangeably in reference to migrants who have not been included and integrated into host communities, or whose integration has not been accepted by the host society. To understand how host societies treat migrants, mainstream social scientists were influenced by two leading questions; (1) Would Africans migrating to the emerging industrial and administrative cities become detribalized² and therefore open to anti-colonial struggles? (2) Would Africans entering the workplace become proletarianized and perhaps open to trade union influence? (Cohen, 2019, pp. 51–51). Answering these questions could most likely be influenced by the nature of host community, whether it is a society or a colonial state. This is because, while the existence of stranger migrant communities in West Africa preceded the creation of modern postcolonial African states, the problems of migrants who are considered strangers currently are compounded by the complicated question of nationality, which is superimposed upon the older problem of citizenship, defined in terms of ethnic identity (Schildkrout, 1970, p. 253). In the Ashanti society, for instance in precolonial Ghana, there was the conscious effort at naturalization. Prisoners of war, slaves or traders could be fully integrated into the society by adopting Ashanti custom. Prisoners of war were settled in special villages where they were taught Ashanti ways. Other strangers were dispersed and settled with families, where they, like many slaves, intermarried and eventually became full citizens. Immigrants therefore lost the status of strangers and became full citizens of the Ashanti state. In this context, the Ashanti state became part of what Cohen calls anthropophagic societies; those societies that swallow and digest their strangers as opposed to anthropoemic societies that vomit out strangers (Cohen, 2019, p. 54). In many of the societies of Western Sudan, strangers were being swallowed and digested in the manner in which they became culturally incorporated and completely integrated into the political system. Such instances include the Fulani in Hausaland, the Nacomce in Mossiland, and the Ngbanya in Gonja. In the same vein, the arrival of the Tabons from Brazil in 1836 represented the first influx of Muslims into Accra (Parker, 2000, p. 164). Parker’s contention is that “though these immigrants retained their distinct identity as Muslims, they became recognized as very much a part of the Ga community, eventually and effectively incorporating the Brazilian Tabon

2 For more on detribalization, see Gluckman (1955), Banton (1965).

Community to become Ga” (Parker 2000, pp. 63–4). Studies on how migrants, either as individuals or groups, integrate into the colonial and postcolonial African states also analyze the challenges regarding integration. In Ghana for instance, Schildkrout noted two major obstacles to the formal integration of strangers into local government structures. The first is the difficulty that many of such strangers are labelled aliens, and that with frequent changes in their legal status, many migrants do not know if they are citizens. The second is the low level of education among stranger Muslims, with few Muslim strangers having formal education (1970, pp. 266–67). The attempt of the Temne immigrants to integrate into the urban settings in Sierra Leone was not without challenge. They initially wanted to transplant their tribal social system into new urban environment. When this proved difficult, they ‘resorted to trade unions, political parties and professing Islam which operated to integrate the social life of immigrants around non-tribal foci’, thereby indirectly making ‘for the disintegration of the tribal groups’ (Banton, 1965, pp. 354–355). Clearly then, the process of integrating migrants into host communities has no clear pattern, but it is increasingly clear in the literature that inclusion and integration of migrants and strangers into host societies is contingent on migrants’ ability to engage in detribalization.

During both colonial and postcolonial Ghana, most migrants constructed imagined communities in the urban areas of Accra and Kumasi, and gave these communities more life by the re-enactment of chieftaincy titles. Language, physical location, religion and other cultural practices had collectively contributed to the exclusion of these migrants in urban Ghana. The re-enactment of chieftaincy titles reinforces loyalty to migrants’ ethnic origins. In addition, labelling the migrant communities with the popular term ‘Zongos’ is also problematic since in postcolonial Ghana, the term ‘Zongo’ is considered inappropriate, a slang that may give rise to a feeling of exclusion among the inhabitants of such settlements (Casentini, 2018, p. 403). Further, the inauguration of the National Council of Zongo Chiefs in 2012 and their conspicuous activities on the national scene could be relevant in forging some kind of host-stranger relations, as well as their integration into the Ghanaian nation-state. It could also represent subtle ways of migrants’ redefinition of perceiving themselves as strangers, and a sense of belonging as part of Ghana’s Houses of Chiefs. The paradox, however, remains how this can be successfully done without detribalization.

Bringing Traditional Authority to the City

The Ghanaian society is bifurcated into traditional sector and the modern sector. Traditional authority in the form of chieftaincy is very vibrant in both sectors but in different forms, indicating the continuous transformation of the chieftaincy institution in the context of increasing modernization. Weber's definition of traditional authority as that type of authority legitimated by sacred traditions (Höhne, 2006, p. 2) and handed down from the past can no longer be understood in the strict sense of the word, since traditional authority has assumed different dimensions across space and time. The terms 'traditional institutions' and 'traditional rulers' are as problematic (Kraxberger, 2009, p. 451), as the title 'chiefs' among migrant communities. A Supreme Court's decision that headship of Ghana's many settler communities were not chiefship (Schildkrout, 2006, p. 596) has not prevented the use of the title 'chief' among migrant leaders. While they may not be properly called chief, they could be accepted as traditional rulers since they try to evoke traditional symbols and practices to re-enact their authority. There is a close relation between tradition and those who hold traditional authority; both refer to the past (Höhne, 2006, p. 2). However, while chiefs hold traditional authority, not all traditional authority holders can be chiefs, especially when appreciating both the sacred and constitutional conception of the term 'chief' in Ghana. In re-enacting the traditional office of chieftaincy in the urban centre, migrants make every effort to bring out the traditional aspect of classical chieftaincy as practiced in their places of origin. The skin, a traditional wear (the smock), cola, and turban traditional wears such as hats are traditional items that are very instrumental in the installation of migrant chiefs. These constitute the symbols of authority.

Symbols of Authority

Long before the foundation of the Gonja kingdom in the 1600s (Jones, 1962), chiefs and kings in the Northern part of the country such as those of the Mole–Dagomba kingdoms, used skins as their symbols of authority. In the Mole–Dagomba kingdoms, sometimes called the Mossi–Dagomba kingdoms in Northern Ghana, chiefly office is called "skins" (Drucker Brown, 1975, p. 101), and a person ascends the skin through an enskinment process, i.e. putting on a skin (Skalnik, 1983, p. 13). As a symbol of chiefly authority in Northern Ghana, the skin is equivalent to the stool in the south (Lund, 2003, p. 589; Drucker–Brown, 1975, p. 31; Skalnik, 1983, p. 13). These skins are of various animals representing the powers of the occupants. While cow skins usually represent the authority of sub-chiefs and divisional chiefs (paramount chiefs), the kings

of the Mole Dagomba kingdoms of Mamprugu, Dagbong and Nanung actually sit on skins of elephant, lion and leopard respectively, to rule their kingdoms independently. Coincidentally, the Gonjas also use skins as their symbols of chiefly authority. That is, in terms of symbolic representations of chiefly authority, both the 'Mole-Dagbani monarch and Yagbunwura (Gonja) sit on "skins" as symbols of authority' (Addo-Fenning, 2013, p. 42). These centralized kingdoms also have allodial titles to lands vested in their various paramount skins, however the management of such lands are in the hands of various chiefs and sub-chiefs (Yaro, 2012, p. 356). The Yagbun Skin represents the Gonja kingdom. The Gonja Traditional Area is located at Damongo. The Yagbun Wura, King of the Gonja kingdom is considered sacred as he is believed to have the spirit of Sumaila Ndewura Jakpa, the founder of the Gonja kingdom. Based on his authority as the ultimate leader, and popularly called father by all, any person who has to be made a chief is actually made by him the king, or by someone who the king himself has made a chief. Thus, all authority in the kingdom emanates from him. This explains why in making a Gonja chief, even on a non-Gonja territory, the Yagbun Wura must be present, or his authority has to be present to authorize the enskinment, and take part in the process, in order to legitimize it.

The Installation of the Gonja Chief of Accra: Ajawueleh Akutikata I

The recent installation of the 'Greater Accra Gonja Community Chief' brought into focus another aspect of traditional leadership in the city of Accra. The date for the installation was trending on social media. The key people responsible for preparations and the venue were so immersed in the activity that, for once, one would have thought that the installation was to take place in the Gonja kingdom in the Savannah Region of Ghana. The event was scheduled for 21st January 2021 as seen on posters and on several social media platforms. It was through one of such posters that the researchers got in touch with certain key members of the Planning Committee, sought permission and were invited to the installation ceremony. As early as 8:00 am, the Planning Committee was already at the venue of the event- the popular Kawukudi Park in Accra. The Committee ensured that canopies were erected, and seats were arranged. By 9:00am, some guests had arrived for the programme scheduled to start at 1:00 pm in the afternoon. First, was the drumming and dancing of various Gonja

traditional dances to the admiration of the crowd gathered. Both men and women were dressed in rich Gonja traditional attire, where many of them participated in the dancing; only men danced first, followed by women, and then both danced together. Particularly, during the famous Damba ‘neck dance’, both men and women displayed their agility of the neck as they thrust it back and forth with quick and rhythmic movements of the legs while they danced in a circle with the drumbeats. The arrival of each Gonja migrant chief to the ceremony was also met with a loud drumming and dancing by the entourage that accompanied a chief. The first key delegate to arrive at the installation ceremony was the representative of the Greater Accra Dagomba Chief, who was the second in command, the highest office holder in the council of elders of the Greater Accra Dagomba Chief, *M Ba wulana*. Later, several migrant chiefs arrived amidst pomp and pageantry, including the Frafra, Kusasi, Mossi, Mamprusi, and Dagaaba chiefs in Accra, as well as the president of the Council of Inner City and Queen Mothers of Ghana (Inner City). There were also representatives of the National Council of Zongo Chiefs, and from the office of Alan Kyeremanten (Ghana’s Minister of Trade and Industry and a presidential aspirant of the New Patriotic Party (NPP)). Members of Parliament from the Gonja kingdom were also present. The National Chief Imam graced the occasion with his presence. The Lepowura, M. D. Jawula, one of the powerful traditional rulers in the Gonja kingdom, represented the king of Gonja and presided over the installation process. From the Gonja kingdom were other traditional rulers, representing the seven skin gates to the kingdom. These seven skin gates³ are the sons of Jakpa whose occupants ascend the Gonja kingship in alternation. Also present were, the Master of Ceremony, Queen Borisa Nkliweche, Development Queen of the Gonja Kingdom, the chairman of the Gonja Youth Association, and the Registrar of the Gonja Traditional Council. To attach more prominence to the installation ceremony, the Chief Linguist of the Gonja King, Alhaji Afuli was present. The Chief Linguist of the Gonja Kingdom, as in many kingdoms in Ghana, represents the powers of the king. Whenever he attends a function on behalf of the king, he represents the king in those functions. During public gatherings, the Gonja king only speaks through the Chief Linguist, and when installing chiefs in the palace, the Chief Linguist plays a crucial role in the process. The newly installed Gonja chief observed thus:

Anywhere you see the Chief Linguist of the Gonja King in any ceremony, know that, that’s the King himself you are

3 These seven gate skins are Kusawgu, Daboya (Wasipe), Bole, Kpembe (Salaga) Tuluwe, kong and Kandie.

seeing. The King of Gonja would not send his linguist to any ceremony if he does not endorse it (Interviews, Ajawaleh Okitikata I, January, 2022).

The selected candidate arrived with a large crowd of people, including drummers, dancers, and warriors. He was wearing a simply sewn white dress. There was a lady carrying ashes in a calabash, while another lady was carrying a white smock in a traditional brass pan. Two sets of skins were already arranged on the floor before his arrival. A relatively smaller skin was placed on top of a fairly larger skin. The skins, in particular, symbolize authority in most Northern kingdoms and chiefdoms. He was held by the elders from the Gonja kingdom and made to sit on the skin on three occasions. The white gown was then held over his head for some period during which the elders and Lepowura took turns to advise him on his expected roles or duties towards the Gonja kingdom, of which the key one is his readiness to welcome the Yagbun Wura or any of the paramount chiefs of the seven gate skins to Accra anytime any of them travel to the city. It was after the advice that the gown was finally slid down his neck, accompanied with jubilations, singing, drumming and dancing. The Chief Imam then prayed for the newly installed Chief. Several goodwill messages were read out from various groups, wishing the new chief peace in his reign, as well as welcoming him to the various groups of migrant chiefs in the city.

Various Forms of Re-enacting Migrant Chieftaincy

There are various forms in the installation process of migrant chiefs. In the areas where northern migrants such as the Gonja and Dagomba come from, there is a lineal process of installation. It is done at one place, which is usually at the palace. In the city however, the installation process requires the candidate to move to the palace of the indigenous/host rulers, where certain rites are performed in the palace of the host chief, alongside the required sacrifices. The second installation process is done in an open space that can accommodate a large crowd in any part of the city. There is no pattern regarding the installation that comes first. None could take precedence over the other. However, the emerging trend from the fieldwork is that, the second installation was normally done by chiefs of the host community. In the case of the first level, host rulers require a sheep, a number of bottles of schnapps and some amount of money. The elders take the schnapps, some of which are poured as libation to the gods of the land, asking for their blessings for the new migrant chief. The new candidate

is then enstooled by sitting on the stool, which is the symbol of chieftaincy authority in the southern part of Ghana, akin to the skin in the North. Again, the sheep is slaughtered, and the new chief is made to step on the blood to seal the installation process. After the enstoolment, the chief is recognized as a member of the Traditional Council of the local indigenous rulers and is invited to sit at the council of the indigenous chiefs. Another variation observed is when some migrant chiefs are turbaned during the installation process in the morning, before they are moved to the palace of the local rulers for the enstoolment. Therefore, it is possible for a migrant chief to be enskinned, enstooled, and turbaned, satisfying his own culture, that of the culture of the local indigenous rulers, as well as the culture of the Muslim community, established by early migrants. Migrant chiefs' quest for inclusion in the Houses of Chiefs appear to be collective even though some of them are already members of Traditional Councils by virtue of their mode of installation.

The Houses of Chiefs in Ghana

The collective result of the constitutional agitations in the Gold Coast, between Nkrumah's Convention People's Party and the opposition, spearheaded by the National Liberation Movement on chieftaincy, was that the institution of chieftaincy was given an apparently secure position in Ghana's Independent Constitution (Order-in-Council), 1957. Ghana's Independence Constitution (Order-in-Council) 1957, "made provisions for a measure of devolution and for the protection of chieftaincy" (Arhin Brempong, 2001, p. 29). As a consequence, five regions were created,⁴ where each was to establish a House of Chiefs as one of the many compromises made in the 1957 Constitution, between the demands of the two major parties: the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), and the National Liberation Movement (NLM). The NLM for instance "wanted a constitutional settlement that would safeguard the position of traditional rulers" (Arhin-Brempong, 2001, p. 29; Grimal, pp. 299–300). Upon the creation of the Houses of Chiefs, they were to act as appellate courts to the then state councils⁵ in resolving chieftaincy disputes. The Chieftaincy Act of 1961 (81) succeeded the 1958 Local Courts Act, which in turn was repealed by 1971 Chieftaincy Act (Act 370), and conferred on the Houses of Chiefs the mandate

4 According to Section 63 (a-e) of the Order-in-Council, the five regions were: Eastern Region (including present day Greater Accra Region), Western Region (including the present Central Region), Ashanti Region (including today's Brong Ahafo Region), Northern Region (Including present day Upper East and Upper West Regions), and Transvolta/Togoland (the present Volta Region). (Arhin Brempong, 2001).

5 The State Councils were earlier established in 1951 after the coming into force of the Local Government Ordinance in August 1951.

as the only official courts (save the Supreme Court of Ghana) to determine the substance of chieftaincy disputes. The 1971 Chieftaincy Act remained in force till 2008 when it was amended and replaced by the 2008 Chieftaincy Act, Act 759 which was gazetted on 20th June 2008. The 1969 Constitution of Ghana, for the first time, provided for the creation of the National House of Chiefs and further guaranteed by Section 1(1) of the 1971 Chieftaincy Act (Act 370), and Section 1(1) of the 2008 Chieftaincy Act (Act 759) respectively. The Houses of Chiefs system was maintained in the 1969, 1979 and in the 1992 Constitutions without any significant alteration. In the 1992 Constitution, the state recognition of chiefs, which was part of the previous constitutions, had been removed. Also, from 1957 onwards, the increase in the number of regions in Ghana has led to a corresponding increase in the number of the Houses of Chiefs and Traditional Councils. Membership of the Houses of Chiefs system is by law and tradition.

Firstly, a person must be a chief who would have met the criteria set by the 1992 Constitution as having hailed from the appropriate family and lineage, must be validly nominated, elected or selected, and then enstooled or enskinned as a chief or queen mother, following relevant customary law and usage (Section 276, 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana). With this constitutional provision, it is only such persons defined as chiefs by the constitution who constitute the Traditional Councils' membership, that of the Regional Houses of Chiefs, as well as the National House of Chiefs

State Recognition and Inclusion of Migrant Chiefs

In most academic scholarship, migrant chiefs are popularly called Zongo chiefs, reflecting migrant communities being labelled as the Zongo. Early Colonial records as captured in the archives have been utilized by geographers (Mensah and Teye, 2021), historians (Arhin, 1971) and anthropologists (Schildkrout, 1974; Pellow, 2012), and sociologists (Baba-Zakaria, 2015) in analysing migrants' community formation in Ghana. In addition, earlier works by Kuper (1965), Skinner (1965), Grindal (1973), Chambas (1979), and Sulemana (1994) have also touched on leadership in the Zongo. Migrant chiefs in Ghana have long been recognised and institutionalized by the colonial authority by passing various administrative ordinances. The British colonial officers for instance 'considered Hausa to be...more effective community leaders and commercial elites (Kobo, 2010, p. 81), thereby incorporating them into the modern political structures. This was started by the British when 'Hausa representatives were

selected to integrate the zongo into the colonial administrative system' (Skinner, 2013, p. 429; Allman, 1991, pp. 3–4). The same principle was extended to the increasing but largely autonomous migrant communities that were geographically and culturally distinct from the host population. In spite of the challenge of extending Indirect Rule to African diaspora in other parts of Africa (O'Rourke, 2012), it was largely successful in the Gold Coast, West Africa, where British viewed the Zongo as a miniature emirate which could be administered through a hierarchy of rulers (headmen). The 'Hausa headman known as the Sarkin Zongo, or Chief of Zongo, was then recognized as the apex of the 'traditional' Hausa Zongo system and given authority over all non-Hausa immigrants (Schildkrout, 1974, p. 118; Allman, 1991, pp. 3–4). By the turn of the twentieth century, the British started by protecting their positions and permitting them to hold informal courts (Schildkrout, 1978, p. 196). Two decades later, an amendment to the 1924 Native Jurisdiction Ordinance, Section 41, sub-section 5, granted the headman of the Hausa community (the Sarkin Zongo) a tribunal, being the first court to be established for non-natives. In the Brong Ahafo region, the Hausa community was recognised by the Atebubuhene as an equivalent of a localized royal lineage of an Akan chiefdom. It is argued that it was Hausa who founded the Zongo and therefore, successive Hausa must occupy the Sarkiship or headship of the Zongo, making the head of the Zongo comparable to that of a sub-chief or a wing chief (Arhin, 1971, p. 70). Throughout the colonial and postcolonial Ghana, migrant chiefs have formed various organizations. Since most early migrants were Muslims, leadership of these migrant communities also assumed Islamic dimension, with some of them combining both secular and religious authority, overseeing both the communities and the mosques which continue to serve as offices and places of teaching and learning. At the same time, some of these migrant chiefs also serve on various committees in the decentralised local government structures of the various Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs).

Challenges of Inclusion into the Houses of Chiefs

Both the colonial and postcolonial Ghanaian state has shown tolerance to migrant chiefs, by recognizing them, and their installation and activities. Over the years, these migrant chiefs have come together to establish associations through which they make overtures to the state to court for further recognition and inclusion into state structures. The National Council of Zongo Chiefs (NCZC) is a successor to the Ghana Muslim Council in 2012. The change of name from Muslim Chiefs to Zongo Chiefs resulted from the

addition of Christian Zongo Chiefs, since there was the need to incorporate them into the existing body of migrant chiefs. Long before the change of name, migrant chiefs have been making demands for inclusion into the Houses of Chiefs. One of the earlier attempts by Zongo chiefs was a request for recognition at the regional level which was reported by Schildkrout (2006). In this report she notes that soon after Ft. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings was elected President of the 4th Republic in 1992, the head of one of Ghana's communities, the Sarkin Zongo of Kumasi, addressed the President on the occasion of the President's visit to Kumasi. He lauded the role of migrant chiefs from 'receiving strangers, the helpless, burying the parentless and claimless dead, and so on, too numerous to mention...and asked President Rawlings that they be given recognition at the Regional Level' (Schildkrout, 2006). The creation of the Council "to integrate Zongos into a 'traditional' system" (Casentini, 2018, p. 461) still has a long way regarding inclusion and integration into the Ghana chieftaincy structure. The NCZCs continues this call either as an association through its Public Relations Officer (PRO), Alhaji Chief Imoro Baba Issah, or, as individual migrant chiefs whenever they get the right opportunity. Recently, the appeal was renewed for the inclusion of Zongo Chiefs into the Regional and National House of Chiefs. The Paramount Chief and Leader of all Zongo Chiefs in Ghana, Maimartaba Sarkin Zongo Sultan Alhaji Omar Farouk Saeed observed their inclusion would help deepen harmony in the country. "Zongo chiefs appeal now to the President of the National House of Chiefs, Togbe Afede XIV, to consider together with other chiefs to include Regional Zongo Chiefs where they are not part of the traditional chiefs, and at least two slots of Zongo representatives into the National House of Chiefs". He said this in Koforidua on 11th February 2018 during the 5th Annual Conference of National Association of Zongo Chiefs (NAZAC) on the theme, "Education, the bedrock of poverty alleviation in the Zongo communities"⁶. The National Council of Zongo Chiefs, started getting the green light when the Osu Mantse, Nii Okwei Kinka Dowuona VI, introduced the Council to the Regional Registrar of the Greater Accra House of Chiefs. Discussions had started in respect of the procedures to adopt for the incorporation. Unfortunately, the death of Nii Okei Kinka in 2021 left the Council in a limbo. Earlier, the Council had sent a petition to the Minister of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, of which no response had been received yet.

6 (<https://www.primenews.com.gh/general-news/house-of-chiefs-zongo-chiefs.html>: Accessed January 20, 2022)

One key challenge emerging amongst the migrant chiefs is how some of them perceive themselves as Ghanaians, natives, sons of the soil, and therefore belong, as opposed to others considered strangers or aliens. In their recent exploratory paper on Dagomba migrant chiefs in Accra, one of the migrant chiefs observed, “We are Ghanaians. We are not like the Zongos even though we are in the Zongo community” (Anamzoya and Baba-Zakaria, 2022, p. 171). Such perceptions coupled with the recent inauguration of the Tudu Bobli Council of Dagbon Community Chiefs in the Greater Accra, presents a challenge for a collective voice to fight a common interest.

While gaining recognition by the Ghanaian state and serving on various committees at the District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies, it is important to state that Ghana’s Constitutions, since independence, has never recognized migrant chiefs even though these special chiefs predate Ghana’s first constitution. Similarly, none of Ghana’s Chieftaincy Acts of 1961 (Act 81), 1971 (Act 370), and 2008 (Act 759) has provided statutory recognition for migrant chiefs. They are not registered nor gazetted by the Registrar of the National House of Chiefs. Thus, changes in the migrant chieftaincy institution cannot therefore be effected by the Houses of Chiefs. The Kumasi High Court’s decision in 1995 further declared that, headmen representing migrant communities are not chiefs and therefore lamented that if care was not taken in awarding chieftaincy titles, there would be a time where it would be difficult to separate chiefs from chaff (Schildkrout, 2006, p. 596). Rejected by the judiciary and not recognized by Ghana’s legislature, migrant chiefs have tacitly courted the support of the executive arm of government to be recognized and incorporated into the Houses of Chiefs structure. While changes in traditional institutions are the result of complicated nexus between government and global policies, population growth, urbanization, and environmental degradation (Yaro, 2012, p. 411), also depend on the attitude of the state towards traditional governing structures and authority, including chieftaincy. The general attitude of the Ghanaian state towards chieftaincy in general has been magnanimous since the promulgation of the Second Republican Constitution in 1969, and the enactment of the 1971 Chieftaincy Act (Act 370). State tolerance of these institutions, including state officials’ attending the inauguration of migrant chiefs and receiving them at the Jubilee House (the seat of Government), tacitly give some form of recognition to migrant chiefs. While these migrant chiefs in Accra could either be elected or otherwise appointed, they nevertheless do not signify hereditary access to land, nor do they necessarily command the same kind of allegiance (Dakubu, 1997, p. 174). This could buttress the point made by the Kumasi High Court that headships of Ghana’s many settler communities

were not chiefships and by extensions cannot be accorded formal customary recognition as chiefs, as to do so will tend to bring down the dignity of the sacred institution of chieftaincy to naught (Schildkrout, 2006, p. 596). The High Court decision stated further that, whether in Kumasi or in London, the definition of a chief in Article 277 of the 1992 Constitution, does not cover the head of a migrant community (Ibid 597). While this quest for inclusion continues, the NCZC observe with a concern, which is the occasional incorporation of migrant chiefs into local traditional councils without informing the mother organization.

The Council wishes that the local traditional councils consult us before adding any of our members to their councils. Without any consultation with the NCZC, the chief that has been invited to sit at the traditional council is in jubilation. He feels so proud that he has been appointed to be part of their council and he comes to announce to his people (Interviews, May 2022, Alhaji Chief Baba Imoro Issah).

Discussions and Conclusions

It was easier for precolonial African states to include and integrate their strangers by practicing cannibalism. Such anthropophagic societies were amalgamated to create colonial states with their artificial boundaries, that is, boundaries that became the basis of inclusion and exclusion, as well as citizens and strangers. In Ghana, urbanization, and consequently migration across these artificial borders led to the creation of stranger communities in the cities which were more of imagined communities (Prempeh, 2022). In spite of the spatial, linguistic, and religious differences from the host communities, the early migrant chiefs won the hearts of the colonial British Administration, and at the first quarter of the 20th century they had made conscious effort to incorporate these migrant communities into the larger colonial administration through the Sarkin Zongo. Although the Zongo headmen recognized that they were not traditional authorities, they regarded themselves as entitled, like the Ashanti chiefs, to official recognition. They thus continued to demand incorporation in local government in the Ashanti region in the early 1950s (Schildkrout, 1970:261) but were less successful. Since independence, Ghana has witnessed the formation of non-political voluntary associations among migrant communities, such as the Ghana Muslim Council, the Ghana Muslim

Community and the Ghana Muslim Representatives Council. The National Council of Zongo Chiefs (NCZC) is the current umbrella Organization of Zongo Chiefs.

Succession to the office of the Head of Mossi Community in Kumasi Zongo in the late 1994, resulted in chieftaincy dispute, which claimed one life. The consequences were the conviction of three men for murder, but more importantly was the “Supreme Court decision that determined that the headships of many Ghana settler communities were not chiefships at all” (Schildkrout, 2006, 594). Despite that the larger Ghanaian state has tacitly recognized migrant chiefs, the Legislative and Judiciary arms of the state are yet to give them official recognition. Over the years, the state has acknowledged their relevance in both rural and urban areas in Ghana. The indigenous Ghanaian chiefs in both Ashanti Region and Greater Accra Region, as well as other major regions continue to receive migrants and recognize them, and their leaders, who they call chiefs. On the state media, journalists address them as chiefs and when they attend state functions, they are addressed as chiefs by state officials. Indeed, in most of their inaugurations, state officials make physical appearance, sometimes physical donations and deliver various speeches that collectively tend to legitimize migrant chieftaincy in Ghana as chiefship. For political reasons, political leaders are cautious of how they deal with migrant chiefs and the larger migrant community in Ghana. The perception among Ghanaian politicians is that the migrant community represents a ‘critical vote’ bank that must be harnessed to ensure victory during highly contested elections (Kobo, 2010, p. 69), and that most political analysts would agree that the NPP’s narrow loss to the NDC in the 2008 General Elections, was due to its failure to obtain this ‘critical vote’ bank (p. 70). Thus, the reintroduction of democratic principles in Africa’s governance system in the 1990s has provided the needed space for the resurgence of chieftaincy (Englebert, 2003) and other forms of migrants’ headship on the continent. Many African states, including Ghana, have continuously tolerated chieftaincy in its different forms, created by different people for the purposes of their organization and welfare in the urban centres. As such, leadership of the two major political parties in Ghana, continue to recognize and include migrant chiefs in urban governance and development.

In 2013, the President of the Republic, purchased them a thirty–three seater bus to enhance their “movement as they coordinate their activities and programmes in other regions,” ... pledged his continuous support to the chiefs of the nation and appealed to them to continue to pray for peace, unity and

development.⁷ The NPP administration under Nana Akufo Addo, created for migrant chiefs the Ministry of Inner-City and Zongo Development in 2018, and in the same year, the Zongo Development Fund was established (Republic of Ghana, 2019). The request by migrant chiefs for inclusion in the Houses of Chiefs would enhance their integration into Ghana's traditional chieftaincy structure. In the interim, while these state interventions bring migrant chiefs closer to the state, the nitty gritty of chieftaincy, especially the constitutional (backing custom), legal and legislative requirements for validity, institutionalization, and inclusion of migrant chiefs, have not been given the needed attention. We can therefore conclude that, the fact that the Houses of Chiefs in Ghana are meant for chiefs with allodial land titles, it poses a major challenge to the inclusion of migrant chiefs. While the Ghanaian state is pluralist by nature, the pluralism is more in the multiple cultures of people under the governance of traditional rulers who by constitutional engineering have become part of the governance structure of the country. Traditional Councils which are part of the Houses of Chiefs structure are statutory bodies, and it would need a legislative support for migrant chiefs' inclusion into these bodies. Between the judiciary and the legislature, the latter is more likely to yield to the request of inclusion by the migrant chiefs since, like the political leaders in the executive arm, the legislators are also politicians who would perhaps need the critical 'vote banks' of migrants, of which migrant chiefs always play a silent but crucial role. Whether or not these insignia make traditional authority holders chiefs, it is an area that requires further socio-anthropological and legal inquiry.

7 (<https://www.modernghana.com/news/464557/president-mahama-donates-bus-to-national-council.html> accessed, May 27, 2022).

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Nota bene: We deeply acknowledge and appreciate the comments of three anonymous reviewers whose comments have greatly enhanced the quality of our paper.