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Citizens and Subjects: Democratisation and Ethnic Identity in Rural Ghana

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Abstract

This study applies institutional analysis to explore the connections between ethnicity and political choice during elections. Inquiries into the electoral politics of Fanteakwa, a multiethnic administrative district and electoral constituency in Ghana, demand that interactions between three institutions of local power be evaluated to explain when ethnicity is a significant factor in political choice. This is largely because although people determine their political allegiance on the basis of political familiarity, they also do so on the basis of economic well-being. The institutional relationships and the characteristics of the local political party, local government administration and chieftaincy define how resources are distributed, who benefits and who does not. And this in turn, drives voters, sometimes drawing on and transforming cleavages defined by ethnicity. This case study also suggests that 'locality', a sub-category of ethnicity, is a more salient factor than ethnicity in determining how individuals think about their political options in a multiethnic setting.

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1. Introduction

This paper uses the case study of Fanteakwa, a constituency located in the Eastern region of the Republic of Ghana, to explore the connections between ethnic identity, political choice and electoral processes. The political landscape of Fanteakwa has been defined by ethnic cleavages and disputes about land rights and political power for many decades. Conflicts between ethnic groups – social organisations that observe distinct cultural and religious customs – preceded the development of contemporary local government administration and the transition to democracy in the area that now constitutes Fanteakwa. Nonetheless, these conflicts not only shape the texture of the sociopolitical landscape, but also are transformed by changes in the constellations of local power that democratisation has brought. As a dynamic multiethnic constituency, Fanteakwa is a suitable area in which to pose the following question: how/when is the salience of ethnic identity determined within the processes of democratisation?

The mapping of the political topography of Fanteakwa, to borrow Catherine Boone's (2003) phrasing, exposes the link between ethnicity and competitive politics – institutions of local power. Chieftaincy, the district assembly and political parties exercise power over local governance and local political activity. The convergence of these three institutions – with their respective histories, cultures and interests – structures political choices in multiethnic contexts and determines if and when ethnic cleavages are salient in political decision-making. This same convergence between chieftaincy, district assembly and political parties also structures the context in which individual political consciousness can transcend the determinant of ethnic identity.

The landscape of Fanteakwa, and multiethnic environments like it, can best be explained using the framework of institutionalism. Institutionalism, as an explanatory framework, has not been extensively applied in generally non-violent multiethnic local contexts, although it is often used in analysis aimed at the prevention of violent ethnic conflict at the national level (see Mozaffar 1995). Recently published research, such as that of David Posner (2005), reinforces the thesis that is proposed here by demonstrating how formal institutional rules determine the kinds of social cleavages that matter in politics. Institutions delineate the strategic context of social, economic

and political interactions in which ethnicity may or may not be salient, and they are particularly critical in processes of democratisation, which introduce political parties and decentralised local government into local settings already politically structured in part by ethnic differences. Chieftaincy is the institution of power linked to ethnicity and it is chieftaincy that gives ethnicity its political verve through its relation to local political parties and the district assembly,.

It is in this institutional context that individuals who identify with certain ethnic groups make their political decisions. People are not pawns in an institutional structure, but the norms and guidelines that are set for them by institutional networks mould choices. By taking an institutional approach to the analysis of ethnicity we are accepting a constructivist departure point: ethnicity is a sociocultural political and historical variable shaped by the character of the institutions operating at the local level, as well as an instrument in the context of those institutions. Only by finding the appropriate fit between agency and structure can we more fully explain the observed pattern of ethnic politics. By viewing the pattern as dynamic we can account for changes and flexibilities in the correlations between ethnicity and political behaviour. We can also accept that other overlapping forms of sociopolitical organisation – village, clan, administrative area, political party – are as influential in the political process.

Additionally, locality is a political variable that complicates definitions of ethnicity and its implications for political choice, especially in places as locally fragmented as Ghana. Although multiethnic settings do give reasons for people of one ethnicity to cooperate for immediate gain, it will be shown in this paper that ultimate political interests are matrilocal or defined by one's village of origin and immediate chiefly authority. In keeping with that logic, the idea of the stranger or outsider does not observe strict ethnic delineations because one can be a stranger from another village even if one is a member of the same ethnic group. This is important because while ethnicity has been identified as the major challenge to an equitable distribution of the benefits of national citizenship, an institutional analysis of Fanteakwa brings out that 'locality' may be a more salient variable. In fact, it is the positioning of local interests within an institutional framework of chieftaincy, district assembly and political parties that determines who can fully exercise the rights of national citizenship at the local level.

The next section analyses theoretical approaches to analysing ethnicity and democratisation in Africa, pointing to the advantages of adopting the institutional logic of ethnicity as an analytical framework. Section 3 focuses on the development and functions of chieftaincy, local government and political parties in both Ghana and in Fanteakwa. It starts with the national development of the institutions and their historical interactions and then sets the case of Fanteakwa within that broader context.

Section 4 explains the concept of the stranger and how institutions of local power have contributed to differentiated experiences of citizenship in the district. Section 4 bends the case study to the the question posed by this paper: in the context of democratising politics, how/why is it that 'ethnicity' functions as a political variable in a multiethnic local setting?

Some conclusions are drawn in Section 5 about some changes in local institutions of power that would transform the way that national citizenship in Ghana is experienced at the local level.

2. Institutional Logic of Ethnic Politics

2.1 Theories of ethnicity in studies of African democratisation

Since the early 1990s, academic discussions of ethnicity in Africa have increasingly contextualised it in the process of democratisation. After a consensus on the desirability of democracy had been reached, the focus turned to its feasibility and those sociopolitical, cultural and economic variables, including ethnicity, that might be obstacles to it (see Nnoli, 1994; Ake, 2000). Initial discussions relied generally on anthropological and historical models of ethnicity, namely primordialism and instrumentalism, developed in the postwar period. These were used to explain how ethnicity works in contemporary politics.[1]

It has been argued that democracy thrives under conditions of individual political dynamics, but that Africans act in keeping with group dynamics (Nnoli, 1994: 18). Democracy assumes that the individual, its basic unit of political activity, operates on

[1]Geertz (1973) has been particularly influential because he combines primordialist and historical-political arguments about the quality of 'ethnic' identity. For a review of four decades of anglophone research on tribalism and 'ethnicity' see Lentz (1995).

the basis of specific interests and rights rather than fixed identities and that the intensity of an individual's interests varies, both across a spectrum of interests and, within a given interest over time. Political society or civil society is necessarily independent of the state and built on flexible and fluctuating group interests, which themselves are aggregations of individual rational choices.[2]

Yet, Africa was described as possessing cultural incompatibilities with democracy largely due to the three defining elements of ethnicity: first, shared cultural attributes, such as language, kinship, ideologies, symbolic repertoires and modes of religious observation; second, an active consciousness of collective selfhood; and third, boundaries in which 'they' constitute the 'us' (Young, 2004: 7). African society, the argument went, is largely characterised by communal living with deeply rooted primordial norms of relating. Africans are more inclined to think of their obligations to other members of the group rather than their individual rights and freedoms and to identify their individual well-being with group welfare. Ethnicity, as an inherited rather than chosen identity, pre-empts the free formation of civil society because it endows individuals with group membership and an accompanying set of interests. Additionally, the problems of liberal democracy in Africa are complicated by the partial displacement of the state by informal communities such as ethnic groups which are not formed rationally (Ake, 1994: 6). In other words, 'the intellectual bricolage that frames the crafting of democracy is premised on the ontological priority of the individual. Ethnicity fits but uneasily with the ontological premises of democratic institutions' (Mozaffar, 1995: 38).

Arguments outlining the incompatibility of African communalism and western-style liberal democracy served as the foundation for explanations of political tribalism. Discussions of political tribalism were initially rooted in the instrumentalist approach to ethnicity, which focuses on the political manipulation of ethnic identities, a process that often builds on and results from the phenomena of ethnic patronage relations.[3] Lonsdale (1994: 131) differentiated between "moral ethnicity or what I call the contested internal standard of civic virtue against which we measure our personal esteem and the unprincipled political tribalism with which groups compete for public resources". In this comparison, he separated ethnicity into a cultural variable on the one hand and a political tool on the other, but also embedded them in each other. In

[2] For discussions of civil society see Fatton (1992). See Nnoli (1994) and Mozaffar (1995: 47-50) for a discussion of the intersection between ethnic politics and rational choice theory.
[3] This becomes clearer in the context of *constructivist* analysis which incorporates *instrumentalism* without denying historical antecedents and which will be discussed presently.

this embedding where ethnic morality and political tribalism meet, politics is a zero-sum game in which patronage networks founded in ethnic identity undermine individual political choice and elections end in violence (Berman, 1998: 333-341).

Following that, it has been argued that democratisation processes, by their very nature of mobilising greater participation through increased political competition, and through placing the question of control (and sharing or redistribution) of state power and resources on top of the political agenda, exacerbate ethnic conflicts and tensions and therefore make their management a critical matter (Osaghae, 1994). Berman insists that "the informal clientelistic networks that dominate politics have involved hierarchical patterns of incorporation and exclusion of ethno-regional elites and communities within the state system of power" (Berman, Eyoh and Kymlicka 2004: 9). This recalls Lonsdale's argument that moral ethnicity gets perverted into political tribalism when ethnic groups collide in competition for resources in state-ordered arenas (Berman, 1998: 341). Ethnicity and democracy speak seemingly different languages. Ethnic identity, though a social reality that has preceded democracy in all African societies, is viewed as a factor that must be at best managed and at worst repressed for the sake of democracy's development (Osaghae, 1994).

2.2 Institutional Analysis of Ethnicity and Democracy

Yet there is another way to analyse the connection between ethnic identity and democracy. Discussions connecting ethnicity and democracy in Africa informed by this approach are based on the premise that African ethnicities are not atavistic, remnants of primitive cultures, but rather modern constructs of the engagement between Africa, capitalism and the nation-state in the colonial and post-colonial eras. This approach is institutionalism and it is rooted in the study of institutional relationships which structure the contexts in which individual identities are defined and political decisions are made. Within such analyses, contemporary ethnic communities and identities in Africa represent critical aspects of a particular African experience of modernity.

Mozzafar (1995), for example, makes a compelling argument for adopting an 'institutional logic of ethnic politics' on the grounds that institutions delineate the strategic context of social, economic, and political interactions. It is important not to forget that state formation in Africa is a process starting from an institutional endowment of ethnic divisions during colonial administrations. In rural areas, prior to independence and the establishment of official local government units, people were

administered by chiefs who presided over ethnic groups. This is particularly significant because political development in Africa has had distinct, if linked, urban and rural contexts.[4] Such differences can be related in part to the fact that African states have had difficulties broadcasting power equally over their entire territories, that in the post-independence decades they remained like the first nationalist governments – although ambitious to extend tentacles throughout society, they were creatures largely with a relatively large head in the capital and fairly rudimentary limbs (Zolberg, 1966: 35). So, even after independence, in many countries such as Ghana, chiefly authority and ethnicity continued to be resilient factors because national governments did not broadcast their powers effectively.

By the early 1980s, these realities prompted calls for new approaches to state-building including decentralisation, which could allow for a more accurate expression of the social pluralism of African societies and make the state more accountable to those people it had historically underprivileged. Institutional changes – including deconcentration, delegation, and devolution – were meant to transfer responsibility and authority from the central government to field units of government ministries, subordinate levels of government, regional authorities and nongovernmental agencies and organisations in order to improve efficiency, governance, equity, development and poverty reduction (Rondinelli and Nellis, 1986). In addition to tackling the issues of disproportional or biased resource distribution, decentralisation had the democratising aim of increasing rural participation in political decision-making (Clarke, 2001). In this way, the state would be 'felt' by all of its citizens and by aggregating their political input at the local level it would become increasingly legitimate. The state's problem with sub-national mobilisation around ethnicity was thus given a local focus and a local, rather than national, institutional solution.

3. Institutions of Local Power at the National and Local Levels in Ghana

3.1 'Native administration' through chiefly rulers

During the colonial period in Ghana, British administrations used chieftaincy to rule the people of the then Gold Coast through a decentralised system of indirect rule' Indirect rule operated through established chiefly hierarchies, as with the Akans of the Colony and the Ashanti Region, or through hierarchies created during the colonial encounter, as with the Tallensi of the Northern Province (Zanu, 1996: 130). In the

[4] See Lentz (1995). While researchers took a constructivist approach to organising 'tribes in towns', they approached rural 'tribes' from a primordialist/essentialist perspective.

Gold Coast, migrations from the lands controlled by one native authority to those controlled by another were frequent, especially after production of primary commodities, such as cocoa and palm oil, increased at the end of the 19th century. In those locations with an abundance of land, such as Akyem Abuakwa in the Eastern Province, land alienation became a source of great wealth. Since chieftaincy regulated access to land and because ethnicity served as a basis for land rights, both chieftaincy and ethnicity defined and distinguished individuals who were subjects/citizens and those who were strangers within traditional areas controlled by respective native authorities. This created a number of problems in areas such as Fanteakwa, where critical numbers of strangers had settled at the beginning of the 20th century.

3.2 The abuses of chiefly power in Fanteakwa

There is evidence that a fully fledged Akyam Abuakwa polity was in place by the 17th century and that it broadly occupied its contemporary boundaries. (Addo-Fenning, 1998). The lands of Abuakwa were sparsely populated with a concentration around the triangle formed by Kibi, the capital of the kingdom, Begoro, one of the most forceful stools in the polity, and Osino, the ancestral home of the ruling Asona matriclan (Addo-Fenning, 1998: 131). By no stretch of postmodernist imagination could Akyem Abuakwa have been seen as a colonial creation. The identity of the Akyemfo, the Akyem people, though subject to reinvention, could be distinguished from other states. Internally, as Rathbone (1996: 510) argues, immediate identities were "both special and based upon descent…local identities were held alongside family and clan affiliations." In the capital of Abuakwa, Kibi, localities represented by their rulers reaffirmed their allegiance to Abuakwa's royal Ofori Panin stool. So the people of Akyem were normatively bounded together by place and blood through family lineages spreading across a geographical location.

In the course of the 20th century, the Akyem identity was tested by two associated developments: the disobedience of subservient chiefs and increasing numbers of strangers living and working on Akyem land. After the abolition of slavery in 1874 and the increasing demand for cocoa and palm oil, Abuakwa's abundance of land proved an attractive commodity (Wilson, 1990: 281). The Native Authority Ordinance of 1927 passed by the British, which supported the position that all land in a kingdom belonged to the paramount chief, 'clashed with the ideas of Akan land tenure' elaborated by leading lawyers of the time (ibid). In Fanteakwa, many of the divisional chiefs and sub-chiefs claimed that the royal family through the paramount stool had

no traditional right to the communal lands over which they ruled, despite King Ofori Atta's objections. These chiefs alienated and sold lands that fell within the geographical area under their control.

The unsanctioned sale of lands in Abuakwa had a two-fold effect: it created cleavages in the Akyem political identity and it established a sizable population of stranger farmers. In the first few years of the 20th century, an estimated 30,000 Krobos migrated to Abuakwa and by the time of the 1948 census "it is clear that in terms of contemporary self-identification the Akyem people were a distinct minority in Akyem Abuakwa: more than 60% of those enumerated told the census-takers that they were strangers" (ibid).

Most notably, the chief of Begoro alienated large tracts of land, despite repeated warnings from Kibi (Addo-Fening, 1999: 168). He did so mostly to farmers from the neighbouring Manya Krobo kingdom, who settled on the vast stretch of unoccupied land between Begoro city and Odumase, the capital of Manya Krobo kindgdom. Half way between the two towns, at Bisa, stones were set to mark the limits of the Krobo farms in order to check the behaviour of the Begoro chief (ibid: 169). In 1915, in the context of high rates of land alienation, Ofori Atta I placed an advertisement in the press banning further sales of land 'and warning prospective buyers of the risk they ran in acquiring land in Abuakwa in any shape or form' (ibid: 133). By then, Krobo farmers had used their *huza* system, in which neighbours buy land next to each other, to establish chains of farms well past the Bisa markers and just miles away from Begoro town and were migrating inwards to settle on the eastern side of the city. The integrity of Abuakwa was threatened in two ways: first, by the increasing numbers of non-Twi-speaking strangers; second, the royal stool was under constant attack from the lower stools who challenged its authority to lead by continued unilateral alienation of land.

Ofori Atta I reacted to these threats in two ways. Through his state council, Okeyman, he declared that stranger farmers were tenants of the local stools and that strangers would have to pay one-third of their produce to that stool and also to be subservient to the paramount of Abuakwa.[5] By effectively taxing stranger farmers and politically subjugating them, he constructed a privileged conception of Akyem identity and transformed the fluidity of belonging that had previously characterised

[5] For a full discussion of Ofori Atta's legislation of the "stranger" see Rathbone (1996).

the area (ibid). He did this despite the fact that a native administration ordinance of 1883 made it illegal for one king to exercise power over the subjects of another (Addo-Fening, 2004). Many of those now defined as strangers in Abuakwa used the ordinance to claim allegiance to their respective rulers and their courts in Manya Krobo and rejected that of Ofori Atta I in Abuakwa (Rathbone, 1996: 515; Addo-Fening, 1997). This led to decades of land disputes during which regional and national courts and the paramount chiefs of each kingdom sought to determine the rights of traditional jurisdiction over what in the end came to be a continuous stretch of Krobo-occupied Akyem Abuakwa land. These ongoing conflicts were complicated when Akyems and Krobos, living on Akyem land but swearing allegiance to Krobo chiefs, became citizens of independent Ghana in 1957.

3.3 From 'native administration' to district assemblies

In preparation for independence in the Gold Coast, the British administration began to support structural changes at the local level. Under the Local Government Ordinance of 1951, elected local councils replaced native authorities. The areas of jurisdiction of the councils were re-demarcated not on the basis of chiefdoms under the native authorities ordinances but on the basis of population size and potential revenue generation to support the local government units[6]. The powers of chiefs were partially eroded, though as Rathbone (2000: 43) has noted, the new councils which were to replace native authorities were one-third constituted by traditional rulers or their representatives.

Between 1958 and 1960, during the first republic of Ghana, the government of Kwame Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party (CPP) attempted to subjugate the most powerful chiefs by enacting a number of laws which transferred local decision-making powers from the chiefs to the government's local representatives.[7] The most severe was the Chiefs (Recognition) Act, passed by the CPP government in 1959, which empowered the prime minister to withdraw recognition of chiefs, direct any chief to refrain from the exercise of his functions, and even prevent the chief from residing in a specific area. Through these laws, the state assumed powers "to authorize the acquisition and use of such lands for either private or public purposes; and to regulate the collection and use of stool revenue" (Ninsin, 1989: 168). These

[6] For a discussion of Nkrumah's divisive policies which undermined this viability see Ayee (1994).
[7] These included the Akim Abuakwa (Stool Revenue) Act, 1958 (Act 8), the Ashanti Stool Act, 1958 (Act 28), the Stool Lands Control Act, 1960 (Act 79).

laws undermined the economic base of many chiefs and sealed their dependence on government.

From independence in 1957 up to 1988, when JJ Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) introduced new local government reforms, the changes in local government could be characterised much more as the deconcentration of state power than as its actual devolution. From 1966 to the mid-1980s local government was conceived of more in terms of the efficient administration of services in the localities than in terms of affording the people an opportunity to govern themselves locally. As Assimeng (1996: 148) points out, during this period there was less emphasis on the words 'local' and 'government' and more on the words 'efficient' and 'administration.' This was demonstrated by the decision of the Busia government to change the name of the Ministry of Local Government to that of the Ministry of Local Administration in 1970.

During the five regimes, two military and three democratic, which ruled Ghana in the postcolonial period, local entities acted largely as the local agents of central government (Wunsch, 1990). In each regime, the structures of local government established by the previous administration were abolished by decree or through the constitution. Second, a law was enacted directing all government activities within a region or district to be coordinated by a senior political or administrative official, exclusively responsible to the centre. Third, local government units were created (either elected or selected) to advise the district political head. Ayee (1998: 4) has argued that this pattern has '"ed to the discontinuity of local government as each new regime in effect erased what the previous regime had done and started over." The inconsistency of local administration and relatively frequent personnel changes adversely affected the capacity of the central government to broadcast its power over the entire territory.

Rawlings' ascent to power in 1981 established a new government, the PNDC, and heralded the building of a new Ghana, from the grassroots up to the central government (Nugent, 1996). The Rawlings attempt to transform rural areas into bastions of people's power (ibid) reflected the push of the Nkrumah government to replace chiefs at the local level with branches representing both the government and the ruling party (Bretton, 1966). The threefold aims of the PNDC listed in their 1983 publication *Decentralisation in Ghana* were: to increase initiative and development at the sub-national level; to reduce the massive gulf between rural people and urban

dwellers; and to end the drift of people from the countryside to the towns (Haynes, 1991: 289). The Local Government Law, 1988, PNDCL 207, Chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution and the Local Government Act 1993, Act 462, turned this vision into law. The 1992 PNDC Constitution positioned decentralisation as a critical factor in democratisation, providing that the state shall "make democracy a reality by decentralising the administrative and financial machinery of government to regions and districts by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government" (Zanu, 1996: 354).

Ghana's current local government structure was put in place in 1988, when 110 newly formed district assemblies (DAs) were given 86 development and infrastructure functions by the PNDC Law 207. Unlike previous systems the DAs can act independently of central administrative oversight. These new local government units are a hybrid system of elected and appointed politicians. Elected representatives account for two-thirds of the assembly membership, while the other one-third is appointed by the government in power. It is important to note that the head of the district assembly, the district chief executive (DCE) and the mayor, who wield a great deal of executive power, are also appointed by the government (Clarke, 2001).

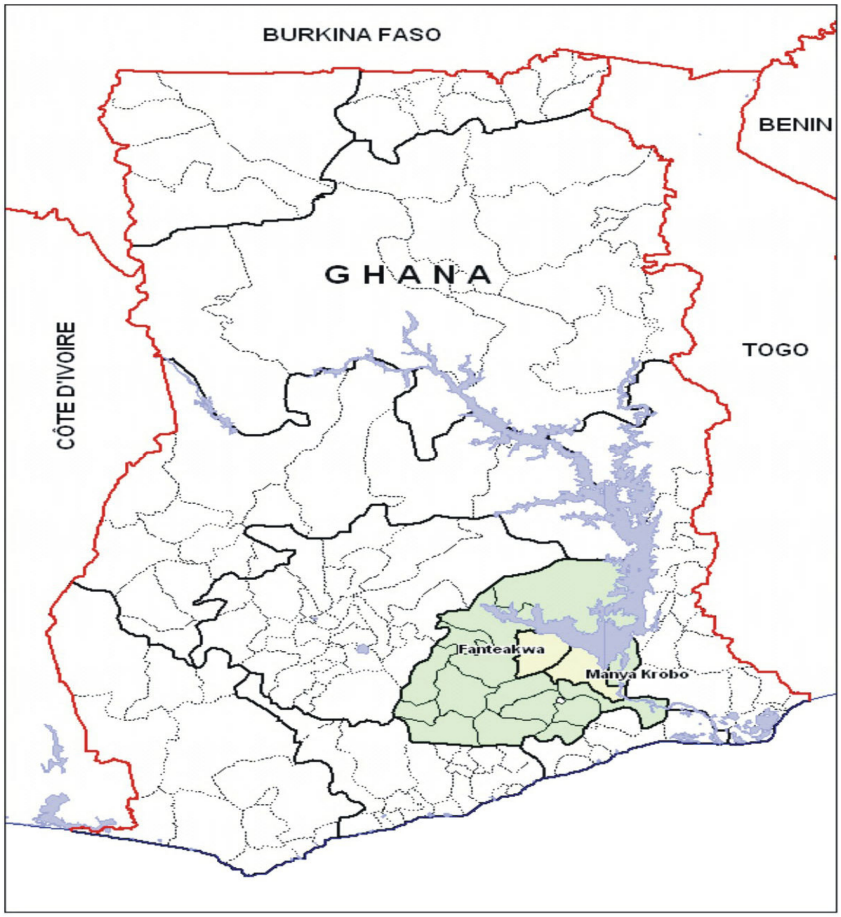

Figure 1: Fanteakwa and Manya Krobo Districts in Ghana

The Committee of Experts that drafted the 1992 Constitution stressed the need for the DAs to be non-partisan. First, it was argued that in the past, elected governments in Ghana cynically exerted influence on local government bodies to win political advantage. Second, the non-partisan character of the DAs would more easily mobilise constituents around development issues at the grass roots (Republic of Ghana, 1991). Yet sceptics argue that Article 248 of the 1992 Constitution, which contains the non-partisan clause, is an act of national self-deception.(Frempong, 2003). The power that the central government exercises at the local level through appointed positions, especially the DCEs, and its presence as the sponsor of economic and social development, has undermined its attempt to be the neutral promoter and defender of participatory democracy. In reality, political parties are considerably involved not only in national and local elections, but also in the administration of local government. As Akwetey (1999: 283) has put it, in the local sphere, "the state is very dominant as an actor and operates less as an arena."

The same 1992 Constitution which fully developed the decentralisation aims of the PNDC government also barred chiefs from taking part in active party politics at the local or national levels (Republic of Ghana, 1992). Two justifications were made for this: first, chiefs should not participate in partisan politics because that would make them too powerful; and second, chiefs should not participate in the "dirtiness and variability" of partisan politics to preserve their honour and so that they are not discredited by party failures (Ansah-Koi, 1998). Boafo-Arthur has conducted a survey that showed that most of the chiefs regarded their exclusion from party politics as a positive development (Amponsah and Boafo-Arthur, 2003). Presidents' appointments of up to 30 per cent of district assemblymen, however, are done in consultation with traditional rulers, and within that, 30 per cent of appointments are allocated for chiefs or their representatives (Assimeng, 1996: 154).

Although its powers have been increasingly undermined, the institution of chieftaincy is culturally resilient and politically influential. Revolutionary governments, notably those of Nkrumah and Rawlings, have painted chieftaincy as incompatible with a modernising nation-state and with democratisation, respectively, in order to justify structural changes in local administration. Yet, as Pinkney (1970: 76) aptly pointed out three decades ago, "chieftaincy in Ghana has always shown considerable resilience by trimming its sails to different political winds without either capitulating to higher authorities or trying to meet them head on." Moreover, it is generally accepted in Ghana that despite its political neutralisation, chiefly authority has been exercised locally in ways that influence political choices and perspectives subtly (Jonah, 2003). So whereas chieftaincy and local government are intended to influence separate spheres of power, there is overlap in practice. In multiethnic localities, the heritage of 'native administration,' the continued influence of chieftaincy and the effective control of local government by the party in power provide the basis for the exercise of ethnic politics.

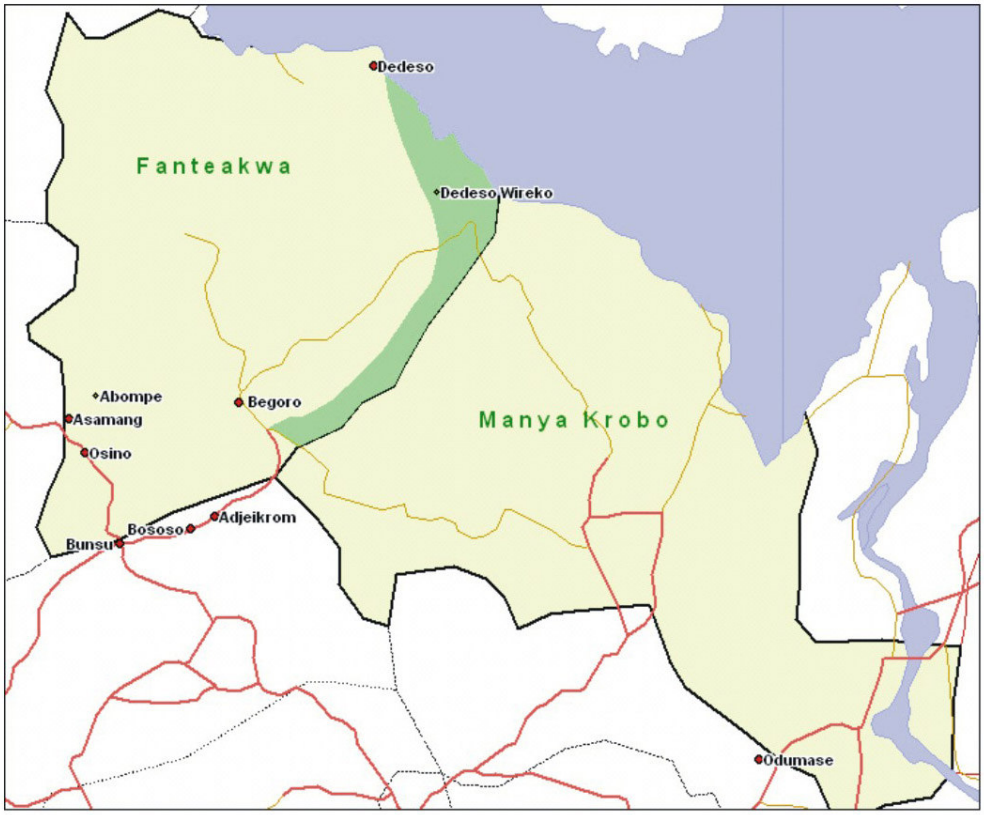

Figure 2: Fanteakwa and Manya Krobo districts after 1981

The conflicts between the Akyem and Manya kingdoms over lands on Akyem's eastern border where many Krobos were living were exacerbated by the successive demarcations of local government councils starting at the beginning of the 1950s. According to Rathbone (2000: 44) "problems emerged from the attempt to fit the new local councils alongside the old "native authorities"…parochial loyalties were reawakened and enlivened by the imminent prospect of change." Until 1962, legislative documents establishing Manya Krobo local council demarcated its limits at the Krobo plantations on Abuakwa's eastern boarder.[8] Then in 1962 when the East Akyem district was formed a large swath of the Krobo-occupied territory between Dede-Sewireko and Ehiamentsiri were transferred away from Many Krobo Council and to the newly formed Begoro Council. The King of Manya Krobo, Konor Azzu Mate Kole, argued that this decision was made because a citizen of Begoro was the regional administrative officer.[9]

[8] MKPA4/22
[9] MKPA4/23

After these heated transfers of jurisdiction, the creation of East Akyem by the Local Government Boundaries Commission in 1973 was the source of the greatest friction between Akyems and Krobos. During the process both paramount chiefs and also residents of the disputed areas petitioned not only the regional administrators, and the ministers of local government, but also, in 1977, the head of the Supreme Military Council to uphold their positions[10]. In 1988, when Fanteakwa was being carved out of the larger East Akyem district, the king of Manya Krobo warned that should the swath of Krobo-occupied territory be delineated in Fanteakwa District and away from Manya Krobo District 'there could be no peaceful co-existence between the Krobos and Akyems in the Ehimentsiri area."[11] A group of 12 village headmen in Ehiamentsiri pleaded their case to the national government making no distinction between local government administration and that of the traditional areas: "we will never under any circumstance sever our allegiance with our Manya Krobo stools, nor will we ever agree to be included in an Akyem Abuakwa administration unit where we only expect go be treated as slaves."[12]

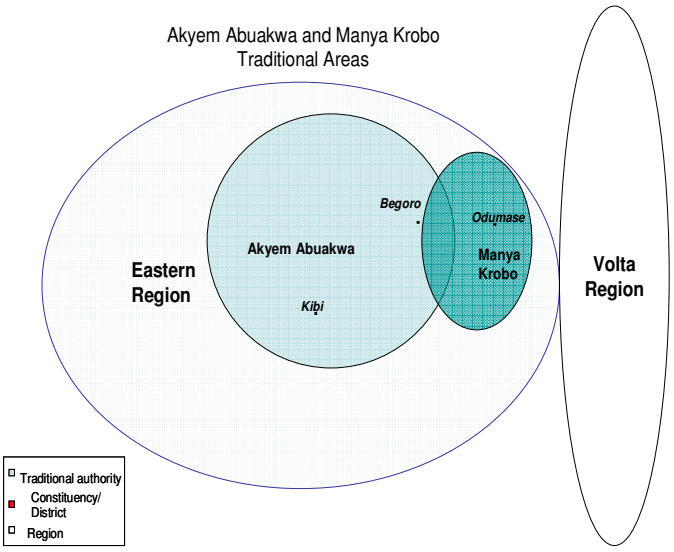

Figure 3: Akyem Abuakwa and Manya Krobo kingdoms

[10] MKPA4/25
[11] MKPA8/4
[12] MKPA4/27

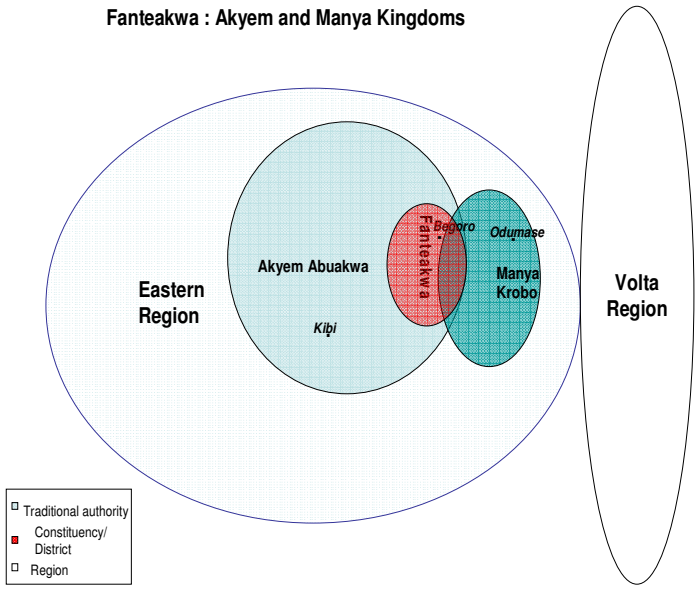

Figure 4: Fanteakwa District

The respective claims on the Krobo 'plantations', which lasted from the rule of Ofori Atta I at the beginning of the century until the late 1990s, have depended on incompatible logics. Although land and people are both factors in the case, this was not a traditional dispute over land possession: Abuakwa admittedly sold it to the Krobos (Addo-Fening, 1999). This was rather a matter of territorial versus traditional jurisdiction: Akyem Abuakwa made claims to the land and therefore to the people living on it; many Krobo made claims to the people and therefore to the land that they lived on. In the post-independence period the successive impositions of local government units on the area did not transform the power dynamics, but rather exacerbated the tensions deriving from them. The traditional leadership of Krobos and the Krobos of the plantations associated the Begoro Council and the East Akyem and Fanteakwa districts with the power of the local chief at Begoro and the Akyem Abuakwa traditional authority. It is telling that Fanteakwa is the local name for the Akyem stool of Begoro,[13] and this suggest that the local government unit in the area carries the mark of ethnic power. For how could Krobos, 'subjugated' and 'enslaved' by the Akyems of Begoro, be provided with equal access to political, economic and civil rights under a district centred at Begoro and called Fanteakwa?

[13] Interview with Samuel Ofosu-Ampofo, Member of Parliament for Fanteakwa and NDC national coordinator, July 23, 2004, Accra, Ghana,

3.5 Danquah-Busia vs. Nkrumahist political traditions in Ghana

The nature of Ghana's contemporary political landscape is often traced back to the development of two opposing political traditions that started in the pre-independence struggles of J.B Danquah and Kwame Nkrumah. As a leader of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), a nationalist movement formed in 1947, Danquah, promoted gradual transition to independence and a respect for chieftaincy as a political and cultural institution (Padmore, 1968: 60). Himself a royal of the Akyem Abuakwa stool, he was influenced not only by his powerful half-brother, Sir Ofori Atta I, as we have seen an ethnic nationalist, but also by a score of like-minded 'royals-cum-professionals-cum-politicians' who filled the ranks of the UGCC (Apter, 1972).

Although the party established its political roots in the dominant ethnic Akan confederacy, in which Akyem Abuakwa was second in status only to Ashanti, it was also known as a conservative organisation with strong sympathies to the British (Ibid: 58). It suffered a major loss in the legislative assembly elections of 1951 and disbanded soon after. Many of its members would resurface in the Ashanti-based Nationalist Liberation Movement and later again in the United Party (UP) in the 1960 referendum, but its candidate, Danquah, made a very poor showing of a little more than 10% against Nkrumah's near 90% (Allman, 1993).[14]

The other line of the political parallel began in 1949 with Nkrumah's creation of the CPP as a populist off-shoot from the conservative UGCC. Discarding gradualism, Nkrumah, the parvenu of the nationalist cohort, and his 'veranda-boys' demanded 'self-government now,' won the leadership of the country in 1951 and led it to independence in 1957 (Austin, 1964: 63). Ghana's first republic under Nkrumah's rule attacked the powers of traditional authority and prosecuted many opponents of royal extraction who formed the elite professional class (Rathbone, 2000). The CPP promoted a revolutionary pan-African ideology and challenged western political and economic orthodoxy with socialist alternatives that led to Nkrumah's 1966 deposition in a CIA-sponsored coup. Socialist ideologies would inform the basis of a score of Nkrumahist parties that developed in the four decades after his overthrow, but the CPP itself would grow increasingly marginal, securing 1% of the presidential votes and three out of 227 parliamentary seats in 2004 (Republic of Ghana, 2004).

[14] African Elections Database, http://africanelections.tripod.com/gh.html.

In 1969, Kofi Busia revived the UP tradition with the overwhelming election of his Progress Party (PP) (104 out of 140 parliamentary seats), defeating NAL (National Alliance of Liberals).[15] Busia was overthrown in a military coup in 1972. During the decade that followed, what came to be known as the Danquah-Busia tradition simmered beneath the surface while political party activity was banned under the Acheampong military regime. When the ban briefly lifted in 1979, the PFP (Popular Front Party), the latest incarnation of the tradition, was badly defeated by the PNP (People's Nationalist Party), a self-proclaimed Nkrumahist cohort led by Hilla Limann, a diplomat from the northern part of the country. The PFP was led by Victor Owusu, foreign minister under Busia, and co-founded by JA Kufuor, his deputy and a founding member of the PP. In 1991 Kufuor would establish the National Patriotic Party (NPP), and he would stand as its successful presidential candidate in both the 2000 and 2004 elections.

By 2000 the NPP began its manifesto with a quote from JB Danquah, the gradual nationalist of the pre-independence era and half-brother of Sir Ofori Atta I, the most famous king of Akyem Abuakwa: "[The Party's] policy is to liberate the energies of the people for the growth of a property owning democracy in this land, with right to life, freedom and justice, as the principles to which the Government and laws of the land should be dedicated in order specifically to enrich life, property and liberty of each and every citizen" (National Patriotic Party of Ghana, 2000). The party was teaming with intellectuals, teachers and those who would be construed as the vanguard of the middle class. The NDC manifesto offered a 'social democracy' that "seeks to marry the efficiency of the market and private initiative with the compassion of state intervention to protect the disadvantaged and the marginalized and to ensure optimum production and distributive justice" (National Democratic Congress, 2004). It is a self-styled party of the oppressed and the poor and its leaders play decisively on class distinctions (ibid). So in 2004 the NDC and the NPP presented themselves at the opposing poles of socialist and capitalist democracy, and the NPP was asserted as a movement with a political history rooted in opposition to Nkrumah and the parties that tried to invoke his ideologies (Quaye, 1995).

3.6 The history of political parties in Fanteakwa

In Akyem Abuakwa, the battle between the two political traditions is as old as Ghana itself. During the independence era, the Convention People's Party's infamous

[15] African Elections Database, http://africanelections.tripod.com/gh.html.

distaste for chieftaincy clashed with "a constructed Akyem Abuakwa identity which had crystallised around kingship as well as kinship" (Rathbone, 2000). In fact, the post-nationalist struggles of the CPP and the opposition manifested themselves theatrically throughout the western part of Abuakwa that now constitutes Fanteakwa. When, in the 1950s, the CPP government favoured Manya Krobo's claim to the Krobo plantations in Akyem, the cabinet worsened relations with rulers of Akyem Abuakwa but created a significant political presence in the Begoro area, which had been dominated by Krobos, even if ruled by an Akyem chief (ibid: 44). In addition to Begoro, the CPP, like the Aborigines Rights Protection Society before it, raised its flag in the towns which had been disaffected during Ofori Atta I's reign. These towns were populated by two groups of citizen. First, communities of ethnic strangers who wanted to protect themselves against the hegemonic influence of the Akyem traditional hierarchy, which they associated with the UGCC. Second, were groups of young men, resisting chiefly authoritarianism.

The presence of the party established a long-standing political attachment in certain communities to the Nkrumahist political tradition precisely because the CPP set itself against the UGCC/Danquah-Busia/UP tradition supported by the Akyem royals.[16] The significance of this dichotomy emerged when multipartyism was reintroduced in 1992. To paraphrase Nugent, a vote for Rawlings was construed as a vote against Akyem hegemony by ethnic strangers hoping to wield some form of defensive power. Political affiliations defined by the Danquah-Busia vs. Nkrumahist political traditions dominate the political landscape of Fanteakwa.

In Ghana, there is a discrepancy between the national-level prescriptions for the functions of chieftaincy, local government and political parties and their local manifestations. As will be shown in the next section, while officially chieftaincy has been robbed of the political power it held during the colonial era, it continues to be tremendously influential, especially in multiethnic environments. It continues to affect the functions of local government administrations. District assemblies, while meant to be non-partisan agents of development, are in reality skewed in favour of the party in power. Political parties, derived from two dominant political traditions, define loyalties and exercise influence in the distribution of resources at the local level.

[16] Interview with Mr. Ajoda, NDC supporter, August 1, 2004, Busoso, Fanteakwa.

4. Ethnicity and Elections within Fanteakwa's Ethnic Pluralism

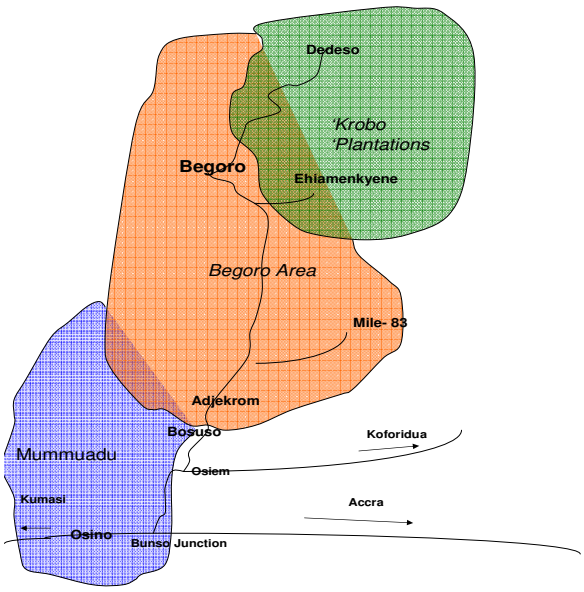

Figure 5: Political spaces of Fanteakwa (a)

4.1 Beware Strangers: Ethnicity and Locality as Political Tools

In Fanteakwa's political landscape, the concept of the stranger defines the identity of individuals by associating them with ethnic groups or geographical locations. It also guides the political decision-making of constituents. This variable is determined by the structured interactions of the institutions of local power discussed in the previous section: chieftaincy, district assembly and political parties. The axis around which all of these institutions orientate is Begoro, both the capital of Fanteakwa district/constituency and the highest-ranked chiefly stool in the constituency. As already discussed, Begoro has a history of assertive, aggressive behaviour at the level of both the chieftaincy and the district assembly. Begoro hosts the district assembly, the palace of the leading chief in the constituency, and the constituency's political party headquarters. The leaders of all three institutions are determined to make the power of Fanteakwa work for the interests of Begoro.

As a result, since Begoro is the centre of power, the definitions of the stranger in Fanteakwa are made from the reference points of Begoro's leaders. A stranger can

be a non-Akyem or an Akyem from another political area, such as Mummuadu. Hence, on the one hand, Krobos in all of Fanteakwa who are effectively culturally distinct –with a different language and calendar of festivals – are strangers. On the other hand, Akyems in Mummuadu who are not culturally distinct – using the same definition – are also strangers when political interests calls for it. The concept of the stranger is as often engaged by political parties as it is by chiefly leaders. For example, the NDC distributed propaganda to Krobos that correlated their land tenure security with loyalty to the NDC.[17] Below are additional cases in which the term stranger was used strategically and referring as much to ethnicity as to locality.

A. In 2000, a Krobo man from the Begoro area, Mr. Ofoe-Caesar, was selected to contest the parliamentary seat for the NPP, reflecting a party policy applied across a few constituencies (such as New Ediubiase and Ejura in Ashanti) in which ethnicity, or more precisely the large stranger populations from NDC- friendly regions, was seen as a serious obstacle to NPP victory. In the candidate's own words:

> In 2000, my party, the New Patriotic Party, felt that we were not doing well in Fanteakwa because of the dominance of the Krobo populations of about 40-45% of registered voters. It was thought …why don't we put a Krobo there to win his own people. Talk to his people because…..since time immemorial, the PNDC/NDC has been drumming into the ears of the people, Krobos especially and other tenant farmers, that if you vote for an Akan or Kufour, an Ashanti, they will take your land from you….why would I vote for someone who will sack me.

The Krobo candidacy was to resonate with the stranger Krobos and the approach partially worked – he lost by less than 1,500 votes when over 32,000 were cast.[18] Yet Mr. Ofoe-Caesar, whose mother is from Adjeikrom, an NDC stronghold, but who spent the majority of his life teaching away from Fanteakwa, could not sway his hometown because its residents did not know him. To them he was a stranger and even more so for representing the NPP, a party they generally opposed. One voter insisted that

> ….the politics here come from our own homes and from…those who separated from the UGCC and went to form the CPP…This used to be a CPP town and now is NDC. In 2000, Caesar ran and he is my brother, but I did not vote for him…I am for the NDC and Ofosu-

[17] Interview with Christopher Narh, NDC organiser, August 5, 2004, Begoro, Ghana.
[18] See Appendix 1

> Ampofo [the incumbent NDC Member of Parliament] is a strong, brave man and he is convincing.[19]

B. In another context, during the NPP primaries in the run-up to the 2004 elections, the two leading candidates, Kwadwo Agyei Addo and Ned 'Arafat' Affum, established campaigns that centred around their respective areas, Begoro and Mummuadu. Affum made arguments within the party to share power between the two NPP strongholds: the district assembly appointee could be a 'Begoro man,' but the member of parliament should be from Mummuadu.[20] Consequently, the Begoro fraction tried to undermine his political credentials among voters in Begoro by branding him as a stranger and tried to disqualify his candidacy. As one voter put it, since Affum's defeat "there is a division between Mummuadu and Begoro…just about every member of the local NPP executive in Fanteakwa is from Begoro and the people feel cheated… although they do not like the candidate they will vote for him because they like the party."[21] Begoro and Mummuadu, NPP-supporting Akyem areas, are rivals for NPP power to the extent that there is a movement among the political leadership of Mummuadu to petition the ministry of local government that it might become its own district/constituency (Addo-Fenning, 1999).

C. Finally, in Dedeso, at the heart of the Krobo plantations and the NDC stronghold, the strangers who for the local NPP constitute a significant part of the 'Krobo factor' – to which many of them attributed the party's continued defeat – have an issue of their own, the 'Begoro problem'.[22] The status of Dedeso and the surrounding villages as strangers on disputed territory, has meant for them subjection to an Akyem chief, Bosompim Iripe, sent from Begoro. The chief has moved into the place, displacing and humiliating the existing Krobo chief, and has been aggravating the local population by attempting to observe Akyem festivals in the area.[23] This matter is complicated by the fact that Iripe collects disproportionately high farming dues on land which he claims belongs to the Begoro stool. There is a sense of powerlessness and alienation among the residents of Dedeso: "Begorohene [chief of Begoro who delegated Iripe to be chief at Dedeso] receives our respects because the land is his,

[19] Interview with Ronald Asoming, voter, July 15, 2004, Adjeikrom, Fanteakwa, Ghana.
[20] Interview with Mercy Teila and James Antiwi, NPP activists, July 15, 2004, Begoro, Fanteakwa, Ghana.
[21] Interview with Ned Affum, Defeated NPP MP, August 1, 2004, Osino, Ghana.
[22] Interview with Nene Ofoe-Bacha, regent of Dedeso, July 22, 2008, Dedeso, Fanteawka, Ghana.
[23] Interview with Raymond Amensi, regent of Togbe Agboho and Philip Akakoh, linguist to the regent, July 22, 2004, Dedeso, Fanteakwa, Ghana.

but he does not have authority over us….still he has sent Bosompim [Iripe] but we already have our chiefs."[24]

There is an association made by the inhabitants of the plantations between the uncomfortable, even tyrannical, imposition of Iripe on their community and the political interests of Begoro/Akyem people. In a group interview of 14 members of the tiny 'Ewe Community' of just 42 voters, when asked why they support Samuel Ofosu-Ampofo the incumbent NDC MP candidate, many answered that he is neither from Begoro nor an Akyem.[25] When I presented myself as the hypothetical Akyem candidate from Begoro who would pledge to fight to remove Iripe from the plantations and asked if they would vote for me, an older man said: "That would be a lie; no one from Begoro would do that." [26]

Together these three examples demonstrate the complex notion of the stranger in Fanteakwa. The force of the notion of the stranger derives from the concentration of power in Begoro and the political interests of two of its institutions – chieftaincy and political parties. These examples show, moreover, that locality is as important as ethnicity in shaping political choice in the constituency. It should be noted that local institutions in Fanteakwa, with the exception of chieftaincy under the Begoro stool, incorporate both Akyem and Krobo participants, but are dominated by Akyems.[27] Although the Fanteakwa district assembly is headed by a Krobo district chief executive, the same Mr. Ofoe- Caesar who ran for and lost the parliamentary seat on an NPP ticket, the Fanteakwa NPP executive committee and district assembly are dominated by Akyems from Begoro.

Last, it is important to note that only in Dedeso was land security even named as a reason for determining political choice. In the other stranger communities association between voting for the NPP and being driven off of one's land is a thing of the past. Mostly, voters supporting either one of the two parties gave the same reasons that voters in Ghana's other constituencies – including ones less cosmopolitan and with no history of ethnic contention – also gave to justify their choices. As in the studies conducted by Whitfield (2003), a number of Ghanaian scholars (see Ayee, 2001, for a compilation of local case studies) and the

[24] Ibid
[25] Ewe Community Group Interview, July 22, 2004, Ewe Community, Fanteakwa, Ghana.
[26] Ibid
[27] This is the general feeling among 'stranger' interviewees, though a breakdown of district assembly members by 'ethnicity' was not available.

quantitative effort of Kurtz (2005), the personality of the incumbent MP and promises of economic development topped the list of reasons for supporting either party among the uneducated. The educated and politically involved named ideology; those on the NPP side particularly stressing the legitimacy of the Danquah/Busia/UP tradition in contrast to the NDC's 'spurious' Nkrumahist antecedents[28]. Many voters also suggested that so-called 'skirt and blouse' voting, or choosing a parliamentary and presidential candidates from opposing parties, was a good way to assure security.

4.2 The political collusion of institutional interests in Begoro

Geographical/ political area	Ethnic composition	Stool status	1.Political tradition 2.Party leanings 3.Voter size	Description	Political grievances
Begoro area	50% Akyem 50% Krobo	Divisional Akyem, reports to paramount	Nkrumah NDC/NPP 15,000	- Begoro city is capital of district and has access to resources; - areas houses district assembly, highest ranking chief of Akyem Abuakwa in the district and political parties' local headquarters -Surrounding villages benefit from proximity to capital - 'islands of strangers' of all ethnic types - have been persuaded by development investment to vote for NPP	
Mummuadu	95% Akyem	Reports to Begoro	Danquah/Busia NPP stronghold 8,000	-Some economic independence derived from positioning on country's main highway - home to Asona clan and therefore connected to the royal house of Akyem Abuakwa in Kibi	-Begoro refuses to share power -MP candidate in 2004 branded as stranger
Krobo Plantations	99.9% stranger 95% Krobo	Krobo with Akyem supervision	Nkrumah NDC stronghold 5.500	-cut off from other parts of the district by unpaved road - no access to clean water or electricity	- Begoro imposed an Akyem chief on them - Receive no protection/support from the district assembly

Table 1: Political spaces of Fanteakwa (b)

[28] Interview with Mercy Teila and James Antiwi, NPP activists, July 15, 2004, Begoro, Fanteakwa, Ghana.

The 'Krobo factor', or Krobos voting solely for the NDC, is, as has been shown, not the sole determining factor of political behaviour in the constituency. The populations of Krobos and of other strangers in Fanteakwa are politically diverse. For example, towns of strangers such as Bosuso consistently contributed to the NPP vote and one-third of the votes in Ehiamenkyene, a part of the Krobo plantation and an NDC stronghold, went to the NPP.[29] The NPP's presence in most stranger communities, including those that associate it with 'Akyem hegemony,' is increasing. The 'Begoro problem,' constituting the 'Krobo factor', represents the undue concentration of power in Begoro, and is a perceived challenge not only for Krobos on the plantations and some strangers on the islands, but also for Akyems of Mummuadu.' Although local interests do not undermine the coherence of NPP support in Fanteakwa they do undermine the stability of the district/constituency as an administrative unit: just as the Krobos of the plantations want to be administered by their own rulers, so the Akyems of Mummuadu make arguments for creating their own district in light of Begoro's excessive flexing of its influence.

This concentration of power in Begoro is of an institutional nature: interethnic cleavages commonly aggregated by some into the 'Krobo factor' result from institutional dynamics which frame how power is distributed and who can wield it. The concentration of that power has come to constitute the 'Begoro problem.' For his part, the chief of Begoro has been exercising this authority by appointing a number of Akyem sub-chiefs to communities who argue that they already have their own ethnic sub-chiefs. He has invited nomadic herders to graze on lands very close to Krobo farms with consequences threatening to Krobo livelihood. The district assembly and members of parliament have failed to act on the side of the farmers (Quaye, 2005). The farmers themselves have no institutional recourse to address the issue. They are experiencing a situation of double subjugation as a result of their status as strangers in the area: they are aggravated by the policies of the Begoro chief and they are without the protection of the local government. Their rights are limited and differentiated from others by the interaction of institutional forces.

This interaction is particularly meaningful during election time. Cognisant that the Krobos on the plantations have been indoctrinated by the NDC to associate land tenure security with NDC political victory, the NPP decided to send reassurance. The chief of Begoro travelled over the potholed, red dirt road to tell the Krobos in Dedeso

[29] See Appendix 1.

that their land tenure was not contingent on NDC support and that the NPP was the party to trust because it was the party in power.[30] This was inspired by the common perception among the NPP leadership that Krobos are safety voters likely to be swayed by the power of incumbency (Addo-Fenning, 2004).[31] The Krobos of the plantations did not believe him; they had the evidence of past evictions, vexatious Akyem chiefs and trespassing cattle grazers to reckon with. In the view of many, the main factor working against the NPP parliamentary candidate in Fanteakwa was that he was from Begoro, representing a Begoro party and supported by a Begoro chief.[32] Most inhabitants of the plantations still see the associated power of the Begoro chief and the NPP as a looming threat (Ofoe-Bacha, 2004).

The district assembly, viewed largely as representing the NPP, was complicit in the 'Begoro problem' by its inactivity. Plantation members associated the assembly, and particularly the district chief executive, with the NPP and in opposition to the NDC member of parliament, Ofosu-Ampofo. As a result, the inability of the assembly to respond to the grievances of the plantation communities reinforced their perception of their disenfranchisement as both ethnic and political minorities in Fanteakwa. The refusal of the district assembly to challenge the Begoro chief's policies on land-grazing, which the plantation communities view as harmful to them, and the intervention of the Begoro chief on behalf of the NPP, reinforces the perception among the residents of the plantation that there is political collusion between the Begoro chief, the district assembly and the local NPP.[33]

This collusion of interest exposes the institutional characteristics of chieftaincy, the district assemblies and political parties in Fanteakwa, which reflects studies done in other places (see, for example, Clarke, 2001, and Ansoh-Koi, 1998). The historical relationship between the three institutions, which has produced the ethnic and local dynamics in the constituency, continues to show itself in the political loyalties of those communities. The collaboration between the institutions during election time reveals that in the context of competitive politics, ethnic and local identity is inevitably brought into the political process through the influence of the institution of chieftaincy. The

[30] Interview with Christopher Narh, NDC organiser, August 5, 2004, Begoro, Ghana.
[31] Interview with Fred Asante and Jones Ofori-Atta, prominent NPP members, July 12, 2004, Kibi, Ghana; interview with Amankwa Esiam, Fanteakwa NPP member, August 1, 2008, Begoro, Ghana.
[32] Interview with Christopher Narh, Fanteakwa NDC leader, August 1 2008, Begoro; interview with Nene Ofoe-Bacha, regent of Dedeso, July 22, 2008, Dedeso, Fanteawka, Ghana.
[33] Interview with Mata Amaning and Christopher Narh, Fanteakwa NDC leaders, August 1, 2008, Begoro, Fanteakwa, Ghana.

partisan district assembly is a tool for the ruling political party – this defines what is broadly referred to as the 'incumbency advantage'.

This collusion in Fanteakwa has boded well for the ruling party's electoral outcomes in general, but it has also exposed the character of the local institutions as straying from their prescribed functions.[34] Although Ansoh-Koi (1998: 150) has argued that chiefs are often forced into the political realm in order to secure the interests of their subjects, the case of Fanteakwa shows that no "great care was taken to maintain at all times a public façade of neutrality, decency, and fairness" on the part of the Begoro chief who openly campaigned for the NPP in the plantations. Just as the NDC used all powers of incumbency when it was in power, the NPP also enlisted chiefly help: as Ansoh-Koi notes, "for chiefs who were willing to support it, it dangled before them the juicy carrots of personal gain, material wealth, communal development and easy access to the powers that are" (ibid: 157). For those who refused to cooperate during election time, the incumbent party brandished the stick of deprivation, frustration, and relative neglect.

Empirical evidence indicates that generally the district chief executive (DCE) is the lynchpin of this 'carrot and stick policy' at the grassroots level (Clarke, 2001). The highest-ranking civil servant in the district, the District Coordinating Director, who carries out the plans of the district assemblies, confirmed the partisan position of the DCE: "the DCE has his political agenda and his goal is to boost the image of the party he represents…He will say that he supports these certain projects in the district because it is vital for the survival of my government" (Clarke, 2001). The DCE of Manya Krobo district assembly, Mr. Andrew Kweisi Teye, suggests that the fact of appointment implies political bias on the part of the DCEs.[35] In the case of Fanteakwa, the DCE's connection to partisan politics is still rather fresh. Mr. Ofoe-Caesar ran and lost on the NPP parliamentary ticket in 2000 and was rewarded by the local NPP executive committee with the administrative position. In his position as DCE he has devoted considerable energy to investing in the stranger communities around Begoro in order to boost their connection to his party.[36] Due to his perception

[34] According to the election results, the number of votes for the NPP increased across all communities. Although the popular feeling among politicians on both sides was that in 2004, the NPP's incumbency advantage would improve its performance; this increase may be a matter of fewer discrepancies in the electoral procedure in some areas.
[35] Interview with Andrew Kweisi Teye, district chief executive of Manya Krobo, August 7, 2004, Krobo Odumase, Ghana.
[36] Interview with Ebenezer Ofoe-Caesar, district chief executive of Fanteakwa, December 23, 2004, Begoro, Ghana.

that he was cheated out of the parliamentary seat by voter discrepancies and in order to prevent a reoccurrence, he spent election day 2004 canvassing polling stations in a hardly non-partisan way.

In this constellation of local power, the chief of Begoro, the NPP-appointed district assembly and executive committee of the Fanteakwa NPP, cooperated to pursue their joint interest in centralising power in Begoro. It was the NPP's position in power that provided it with an opportunity to deploy a two-fold strategy after its attempt to sway strangers by presenting a stranger candidate for the parliamentary seat failed in 2000 (Ofoe-Caesar, 2004). First, the party used the district assembly by strategically investing in the economic development of 'Krobo islands' around Begoro to address the economic grievances of stranger populations. Second, the NNP sent the chief of Begoro to the Krobo plantations to assure its residents that their land security is in no way linked to the victory of the NPP. While the first approach produced positive results, the second was met with suspicion and disbelief.

Many strangers who live in Begoro, the capital of the district, and in surrounding villages, on stranger islands gave their support to the NPP in 2004 despite their loyalty to the NDC in the previous four elections. Villages such as Mile-83, where over the last four years the NPP district assembly has built schools, roads or brought electricity, contributed to tipping the scales in the NPP's favour. But in the poorest area of the plantations of Fanteakwa, where the economically threatening aggravations of the Begoro stool were ignored by the district assembly, stranger communities maintained a loyalty to the opposition party. Nonetheless, although the Krobo plantations again delivered the bulk of the NDC vote, for many of their inhabitants the obviously shifting balance in favour of the NPP provided a worthwhile motive to join its ranks. In fact, the number of NPP supporters in many of Fanteakwa's communities is rapidly increasing. It is difficult to ignore the economic power concentrated in the district assembly – which represents the ruling government, the influence of the pro-government Begoro chief and the financial resources at the disposal of the local New Patriotic Party committee.

Seven communities, in the constituency's three political areas – the Begoro, Mummuadu and the Krobo plantations – demonstrate that both ethnicity and locality guide political choice. Ethnic identity based on descent through kingship and preserved through cultural practice is held alongside spatial identity, "bounded up with the complex of ideas which swirl around theory and practice of matrilocality"

(Rathbone, 1996: 510). Identity and political interests derive not only from one's ethnicity but also from one's mother town or village. This is critical in Fanteakwa, where ethnicity has been construed as the determining factor in electoral choice. Explanations of electoral outcomes using the 'Krobo factor' inaccurately affix a political marker onto ethnicity when in fact political parties claim supporters from all ethnicities and the levels of loyalty to political parties varies within ethnic groups. These variations are in large part contingent on the position of communities with respect to the three institutional powers – chieftaincy, local government and political parties. The interaction of these institutions determines when someone is called a stranger and to what extent identity matters in the political process.

In the December 2004 elections, many Krobos did vote for the NPP – so many, in fact, that the NPP won both the parliamentary and presidential seats despite the 'Krobo factor.' The actual constellation of power in Fanteakwa that produced and perpetuates the political distrust among its various constituencies is as complex as the resilient notion of the stranger. Institutions of local power deploy this concept of the stranger for their convenience and to the point that its use relates to the concentration of power in Begoro rather than to ethnicity itself. In fact, the number of NPP supporters in many of Fanteakwa's communities is rapidly increasing, despite their communal suspicions of each other, because of the economic power concentrated in the ruling NPP district assembly, the influence of an NPP partial chief, and the financial resources at the disposal of the local committee. The function of ethnicity in this multi-ethnic context is thus contingent on the historical interactions of the institutions that structure it. Historically, while chieftaincy and local government preceded political parties, they influenced and were transformed by the introduction of multipartyism to produce ethnically informed political dynamics. Together the three institutions have created the structural environment within which political choices are made and in which ethnic identity plays a role. Yet, as we have seen, local identities may often be much more meaningful in the assigning of political interests than ethnic identities.

5. Democracy, Ethnicity and Citizenship Rights

This case study of Fanteakwa attempted to answer questions about ethnicity as a variable in the process of democratisation. It viewed the question through the prism of institutional analysis focusing on three institutions of local power: chieftaincy, local

government and local political party. It was argued that these institutions structure the context in which the salience of ethnicity as a factor in the process of democratisation is determined. The extent to which institutions of democratisation – elections, district assemblies or political parties – are adopted at the local level depends on their interaction with pre-existing institutions at the local level. Analysis that ignores the interactions between chieftaincy, local government and political parties misses the important point that it is this interaction that structures political choice in multiethnic settings. Moreover, so long as chieftaincy remains influential it should not be surprising that ethnicity and locality are significant.

It has been established that the source of ethnic tensions between the Akyem and Krobos was a dispute about traditional jurisdiction in the Krobo plantations and that it produced the officially rigid, if practically flexible, dichotomy of subjects/citizens and strangers in the area that would eventually constitute Fanteakwa. The structure of local government reforms in the post-independence period did little to transform the ethnic dynamic of Akyem domination because chieftaincy as an institution proved resilient in its grasp on local power. Consequently the experience of national citizenship in Fanteakwa continued to be differentiated by ethnicity and locality. The weakness of local government institutions in the face of chiefly powers had much to do with the realities of local government reforms, which, as described earlier, followed a pattern of frequent changes with no real devolution of power from the centre. Local government units, as administrative bodies at the service of the state, reinforced local power dynamics established by chieftaincy and could not serve as vehicles through which ethnic differentiations of national citizenship could be corrected.

Yet, institutional interactions also have the potential to expand the identity choices of individual and communities. When that happens, ethnicity becomes a lesser variable and political outcomes previously deemed impossible occur, such as the swaying of members of one ethnic group away from the party they had been loyal to since the introduction of elections. Local government leaders have to be willing to treat all communities within their sphere of influence equally, regardless of their chiefly jurisdiction or party affiliation. Local governments have to be more accountable to the people they govern. That is a way to gain credibility in communities that have preconceived notions about the loyalties of local government units.

Nonetheless, the process of democratisation cannot stop there. Beyond elections, democracy should make governments accountable to citizens, not just citizens who are close to leaders in power, but all citizens who fall under the jurisdiction of governing bodies. From that standpoint, district assemblies should be given incentives to perform as real agents of development, rather than simply as representatives of the central government at the local level. District assemblymen and executives should all be elected and assemblies should become more independent in the management of their resources so that there is less pressure to rely on the party in power for development support.

In Ghana, there is an understanding that districts must become more politically and economically independent. The Ministry of Finance has set out plans to decentralise the budget process beginning in 2009. Private sector financial institutions are encouraging the issue of municipal bonds so that districts can raise their own funds. The Ministry of Trade has led the structuring of a District Industrialisation Project under which value-added agricultural enterprises would operate through a partnership between district assemblies and domestic and international investors. There is a push in the country to drive development by promoting the independence of district assemblies. Observers should pay attention to how local leaders respond to this push and how they choose to distribute the benefits of initiatives that will endow them with more independence. District assemblies should embrace these opportunities positively so that they can eventually become independent of the central government in a meaningful way. When that happens, local government will be more accountable to all of their citizens and national citizenship may become a more meaningful reference point for district dwellers as well.

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