

REINVENTING THE LOCAL? PRIVATIZATION, DECENTRALIZATION AND THE POLITICS OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: EXAMPLES FROM AFRICA

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ABSTRACT This paper re-examines the common argument that defining and securing local ownership of resources and social activities is the key to sustainable development and democratization in contemporary Africa. In the process of deciding who and what are local, administrators and policy makers often provoke debates and struggles that lead to conflict rather than cooperation, and complicate rather than clarify practices of resource management and governance.

Key Words: Local; Ownership; Governance; Sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

As evidence mounted in the late 1980s and early 1990s that structural adjustment “reforms” were often followed by deepening poverty and accelerated depletion of natural resource, scholars and policy makers began to search for alternative approaches. Rather than return to state-centered development strategies that were commonly blamed for the debt crisis and economic stagnation of the 1970s, many argued that policy reforms should seek to engage ordinary people in the development process by strengthening their access to resources and economic opportunities and giving them a greater voice in decisions about governance and resource management. Under such rubrics as “community titling,” “participatory development,” or “*gestion de terroirs*,” international agencies and NGOs announced their intention to promote equitable and sustainable development, not by curtailing market forces, but by extending the benefits of market liberalization and good governance to poor and politically marginalized people. In keeping with the tenets of market liberalization, it was argued that one way to do this was to “empower” local people—individuals and communities—by securing their rights to land and natural resources, and strengthening local structures of governance.

Arguments for local empowerment rest on several assumptions. One, which is often implied rather than stated explicitly, is that “local” is synonymous with “poor,” “marginalized,” or “ordinary” people, and that channeling resources to local communities promotes equitable patterns of growth. A second, related assumption is that ownership of resources is a necessary condition for effective resource management. If “local” ownership rights are secured (i.e., clearly defined and enforced), it is argued, ordinary people will have both the incentive

and the authority to decide how to use them. Because they are local, “local” people are also likely to be familiar with their immediate surroundings and, in many cases, to depend on the local environment for a significant portion of their livelihood. In other words, local people have both the incentive and the knowledge to manage environmental resources in an effective and sustainable manner. Securing their property rights and allowing them increased scope for self-government, policy makers argue, will help to create conditions favorable to equitable and sustainable development.

Recent studies in Ghana and other African countries suggest that these assumptions need to be carefully examined. Programs designed to secure local rights of ownership (e.g., through land registration) and/or decentralize structures of government often interact with local interests and patterns of authority in complex ways, sometimes reinforcing or enhancing differential patterns of privilege, or creating new forms of exclusion, in the name of protecting community rights. This happens, I will argue, not only because of manipulation or subversion “from above,” but also because the process of defining and authorizing local ownership evokes competing claims to identity and entitlement that call into question the meaning of “ownership” and “locality” per se. Efforts to privatize ownership and decentralize authority and administration give rise to struggles over power and resources that complicate, and sometimes subvert, the processes of development and democratization that they are intended to support.

In the present essay, I examine some of the issues raised in these struggles, and discuss their implications for ordinary people’s involvement in resource management and governance. To do this, it is useful to consider how efforts to promote local empowerment have been shaped by the prevailing context of market liberalization, as well as how far they can be understood in terms of the market liberalization paradigm.

I begin by outlining my argument in general terms; then amplify it with examples drawn, first, from several recent studies that illustrate some of the contingencies of privatization and decentralization in different parts of Africa and, second, from my own and others’ researches on forest management practices in Ghana.

MARKET LIBERALIZATION AND THE SEARCH FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Current scholarly and practical interest in “local empowerment” developed in the context of structural adjustment—programs of economic reorganization imposed on African governments by their international creditors in exchange for financial assistance to cope with the debt crisis of the late 1970s. The architects of structural adjustment argued that economic stagnation and the uncontrolled increases in foreign and domestic debts that beset many African countries at the time were symptoms of widespread mismanagement and misallocation of resources brought on by excessive state involvement in economic activity and

market regulation. Structural adjustment reforms sought to stabilize African economies and create a sound basis for future development by opening African markets to global investment and competition, and shrinking both the size and the scope of African governments' economic and regulatory activities. Sweeping programs of fiscal austerity were implemented rapidly, and the process of dismantling market controls and state owned enterprises began.

In their initial enthusiasm for deregulation, the authors of structural adjustment policies tended to downplay the question of what role governments should play in economic affairs—effectively ignoring even standard neoclassical arguments that, in order to function effectively, markets need governments to define and enforce contracts and property rights, take account of externalities, regulate monopolies, and address the needs of those who are unable to provide for themselves. Using the threat of insolvency to push for reform, Africa's international creditors made further financial assistance conditional on governments' adopting sweeping programs of fiscal austerity, deregulation and privatization. By the late 1980s, it had become clear not only that economic stabilization measures were imposing widespread hardship on the poor, but that deregulation was often exacerbating inequality, corruption and environmental degradation, rather than promoting sustainable growth.

Spurred by such evidence, proponents of structural adjustment embarked on a search for effective forms of governance—not to reverse the course of market liberalization in Africa, but to complement and strengthen it. Their efforts took a variety of specific forms, but in general were designed both to reform the structure and performance of African governments themselves, and to expand the scope for private or non-governmental agents to engage in both market activities and the production and maintenance of social order. Adding “political conditionality” to the terms that African governments were required to meet in order to qualify for financial assistance, international institutions and donor governments pressed states to replace military and one-party regimes with governments chosen through multi-party elections. They also encouraged increased involvement of NGOs in development programming and the provision of social services, and experimented with various schemes to strengthen “civil society” and promote “participatory” development.

Both the political reforms and the non-governmental capacity building efforts sponsored by donor institutions tend to be cast in the mould of privatization. During the 1990s, donor institutions sharply reduced their loans and grants to African governments, preferring to disburse aid and provide technical and managerial assistance through contracts with private firms and consultants.⁽¹⁾ African governments were also urged to divest themselves of state-owned assets and enterprises, sub-contract public services to private firms, and implement legislative and administrative measures to clarify and enforce rights of ownership for both private and public agencies.⁽²⁾ By the turn of the century, these efforts had broadened into a widespread campaign to decentralize structures of authority and processes of governance, both within and outside of state institutions. In recent years, most state and internationally sponsored schemes of local

empowerment have been carried out within the framework of market liberalization and governmental “capacity building.” To obtain funds, many grassroots and other independent groups have been obliged to follow suit, whether they support market liberalization in principle, or not.

MEANINGS AND PRACTICES OF LOCALITY

Like farming systems research, which has been compared to “hitting a moving target” (Maxwell, 1986), “local empowerment” is at best a work in progress. “Local” has become something of a catchall term, used to denote people, place, institutions, or cultural practices—or all of these at once, implying that they coincide or are interchangeable, which is often not the case. Such usage is common not only among scholars who seek to describe localities and analyze local processes, or policy-makers who want to operationalize them, but also in the language and actions of people who are directly involved. As a general precept, “local empowerment” has broad appeal, but when translated into specific programs to allocate funds, assign rights of ownership, or demarcate local jurisdictions, it can become confusing and/or contentious. “Who’s local here?” as Pauline Peters put it in her introduction to a symposium on participatory development. “How is a community defined and by whom?” (Peters, 1996). Where does the territory of one locality begin and another end?

Such questions do not admit of quick or easy answers. As Sivaramakrishnan explained in a recent article on forest management in West Bengal:

[g]overnmental procedures that nominate one form of community as relevant to the government’s vision of development promptly move villagers and political representatives to reveal the existence of numerous other forms of community. The denial of other forms of community, implicit in the imposition of one form, threatens certain interests and identities. These are then asserted in the ensuing contest to give shape to public order institutions (Sivaramakrishnan, 2000: 448).

In Africa, where governments’ visions of development often center, these days, on demarcating social, territorial, or jurisdictional boundaries, debates over “forms of community” turn on issues of identity and belonging that, in turn, raise questions about knowledge and authority. “Who belongs?” leads to “who knows?” and “who will, or ought to, decide?”

Raised in response to government or donor initiatives, these questions tend to evoke multiple, often conflicting answers. This happens not only because powerful actors manipulate or subvert “local” processes to serve their own interests, or because people invent traditions to take advantage of changing circumstances,⁽³⁾ but also because localities have histories. Over time, as people move, change their ways, and reorganize social institutions and relationships; they accumulate informal “archives” of remembered and/or recorded events and

relationships, which may be called into play when questions of local identity or jurisdiction are at issue. In most areas of Africa today, popular accounts of “customary” precepts and historical precedents have been augmented by a century or more of state interventions designed to coopt or remake “custom” in the service of their own agendas. In establishing and exercising state power, both colonial and postcolonial regimes carried out repeated rounds of boundary demarcation and social classification, often revising or contravening the work of their predecessors in the process. Such histories of state-directed exercises in mapping, counting and classifying people and environments and adjudicating disputes created their own archives of documented and remembered demarcations, which often inform, revise or compete with unofficial stories, rather than supplanting them entirely. Together, these state and popular “archives” provide an extensive repertoire of overlapping, divergent or conflicting precedents to be cited, reinterpreted and contested when new programs of development, land registration, or administrative reorganization are proposed.

Ironically, current efforts to “modernize” African political economies by ratifying and recording rights of ownership, streamlining administrative procedures, and settling unresolved disputes over boundaries and belonging have sometimes reopened debates over precedents and “traditions” that were supposedly laid to rest with the end of indirect rule. In the context of market liberalization, programs that seek to privatize ownership, or decentralize authority and administration, lend new urgency to old questions of “who’s local?” “who knows?” and who should decide? Stimulated by their own distrust of government agents, and inspired by examples of indigenous people’s movements in other parts of the world, many Africans are re-excavating the past for precepts and precedents to define and justify their claims to property and authority in the present. As they do so, they find that history’s archives are richly endowed with memories as well as artifacts and documents, that possibilities for (re)interpretation are legion, and debate, once started, can easily become self-perpetuating.

The resulting “confusions” are often deplored, both by those who believe that decisive action is a necessary condition for social progress, and by those who see the ambiguity of unresolved debates as a convenient smokescreen for exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful. Their criticisms are telling, but they are not the whole story. Intertwined with debates over the scope and legitimacy of authority, struggles over ownership and precedent are implicated in practices of governance, as well as in processes of social competition and conflict. As part of the process of privatization and decentralization in Africa, they warrant a closer look.

LOCAL EMPOWERMENT IN PRACTICE

In the previous section, I argued in general terms that processes of privatization and decentralization tend to generate overlapping and inconclusive debates

over boundaries and belonging that may reshape patterns of ownership and authority in unexpected ways. The following examples, drawn from recent studies in several different African venues, illustrate some of the ways in which this happens.

I. Classifying nature?

Like many development projects, conservation schemes often construct localities in ways that ignore or play down their dynamism and instability. Like the “*approche terroir*” favored by many francophone planners, which directs plans and resources to imagined local communities, and can lead to arbitrary demarcations of social and spatial boundaries, schemes for environmental protection may give rise to arbitrary classifications of species, including humans. In 1990, for example, the World Wide Fund for Nature spearheaded the creation of a vast protected area (the Dzanga-Ndoki Park and surrounding “buffer zone” known as the Dzanga Sangha Special Reserve) in the equatorial rainforests of southwestern Central African Republic (CAR). In drawing up rules for managing the park, the organizers assumed that the forest was threatened primarily by “outsiders” —migrants and commercial investors who did not understand the forest environment, and were prone to misuse it. In implementing the project, WWF distinguished between BaAka, or “pygmies,” who were considered to be part of the natural forest habitat, and other Africans who had migrated into the area at various times in the past. BaAka were permitted to hunt and forage inside the park (as long as they used “traditional” methods—no wire snares or steel-tipped arrows!), but other people were excluded. This logic was extended to amenities that the project provided to demonstrate its concern for the welfare of local communities. When a school was built on the perimeter of the reserve, BaAka children were admitted, but children of Mpiemu and other African parents were not. Although many Mpiemu had lived in the neighborhood for two or three generations, they were classified—regardless of age, occupation or individual behavior—as “migrants” and therefore an environmental hazard (Giles-Vernick, 2000).

II. Basarwa activism.

To avoid such misuse of historical and ethnographic evidence, it is often argued that local people should classify themselves. In the current context of intellectual and programmatic support for privatization and local empowerment, increasing numbers of ordinary people have begun to do this. Mazonde’s account of Basarwa politicization, which followed the reorganization of “tribal” land tenure in Botswana, is a case in point. Long exoticized by anthropologists as relics of pre-neolithic cultures, and exploited as menial laborers by both European and Batswana farmers and ranchers, the Basarwa or “Bushmen” were left out when land was allocated under Botswana’s Tribal Lands Act in 1968 because they were not legally recognized as a “tribe.” Several years later, when

privatization and enclosure of range lands was initiated under the Tribal Grazing Lands Policy,

Basarwa living on such lands were evicted by the ranchers without compensation because, not being members of any tribe, they were regarded as having no rights to the land they were occupying (Mazonde, 1996: 55).

In protest, Basarwa activists organized a land rights movement, appealing their cases to local Land Boards, lodging complaints with district councils, and articulating their cause to the media. With the active encouragement of Namibian groups and some foreign aid agencies, representatives from different Basarwa groups soon expanded their political agenda, calling themselves the First People of the Kalahari,⁽⁴⁾ and demanding representation in national government institutions, and the right to education in their mother tongues. Once shunned as a term of opprobrium, by the early 1990s, “Basarwa” was becoming a symbol of political activism and cultural pride.

Some Basarwa parted company with their self-appointed leaders, however, over practical questions of economic strategy. Stressing their claims to indigeneity as the original inhabitants of ancient hunting grounds, Basarwa activists insisted on their collective right to remain on land that the Botswana government wished to convert to a game and wildlife reserve, in order to capitalize on the growing international market for ecotourism. But many Basarwa were attracted by the government’s offer of cattle in exchange for relocation, and chose to leave the reserves instead. According to Mazonde, this division between Basarwa spokesmen and their “constituents” allowed the government not only to discredit Basarwa activists and undermine their drive for political influence, but also to delay implementation of the full relocation program. By the mid-1990s, the majority of Basarwa remained without cattle, forced to depend on meager relief supplies distributed by the state, or work at menial jobs for which they earned but a fraction of the average rural household income (Mazonde, 1996: 56). Frustrated by the political stalemate, Basarwa leaders were beginning to argue that Basarwa should adopt Tswana institutions, such as chieftaincy, in apparent contradiction to their original platform of cultural authenticity and their claims to minority rights.

III. Acquired autochthony?

In some situations, official recognition (rather than denial) of local rights to land and/or political status may contribute to heightened ethnic consciousness, leading to tension or outright conflict among people who had coexisted without difficulty before the “reforms.” An example may be drawn from recent research by Pierre-Yves LeMeur and others in Ouesse, a frontier zone in central Benin with an ethnically heterogeneous population. (LeMeur, 2002a; 2002b) In the 17th and 18th centuries, this area served as a refuge for Yoruba and Fon-Adja migrants who sought, with varying degrees of success, to escape from Daho-

mean slave raids. Over time, their descendants came to be known as Mahi, a loose ethnic category whose members are now considered “autochtones” in central Benin. During the colonial period, the commercialization of food crop cultivation drew new migrants into the area from southwestern and northern Benin, while others left Ouesse to work in the cocoa farming regions of Ghana and later Cote d’Ivoire. In the 1960s, Idacha (Yoruba) migrants came from the south to grow yams, followed by Fon from Abomey and others from northwest Benin who were attracted by the development of cotton cultivation in Ouesse in the 1980s.

Despite the arrival of new migrants, land in Ouesse remained relatively abundant, and land tenure arrangements were loosely defined. As in other Yoruba communities in Nigeria and southeastern Benin, land was controlled by lineages rather than chiefs, typically those who claimed to be “first comers” in the area. Migrants established themselves as clients of one or another landholding lineage, working first as farm laborers, later establishing farms of their own, and acknowledging their status as latecomers with occasional contributions of labor, produce or cash. As early immigrants were joined by their “brothers,” they introduced them to local landholders and helped them get established as farmers, forming a new category of secondary patrons or “*tutors*” who acted as intermediaries between “first comer” lineages and recent immigrants.⁽⁵⁾

After Benin converted to electoral democracy in the early 1990s, the state launched a series of initiatives designed to decentralize authority, strengthen local management of natural resources (Projet de Gestion des Ressources Naturelles du Terroir) and, from 1997, to register individual and community holdings of land. In Ouesse, chiefs (*axosu*), who had previously played no role in land matters except to help settle occasional disputes, now put themselves forward as experts—repositories of knowledge about local histories of migration and land use, that was needed to sort out the boundaries of *terroirs* and assign rights to particular fields, pastures, hunting grounds, and forests. Not surprisingly, their newly asserted claims to authority in matters of land allocation and local history were challenged, not only by the heads of landholding lineages, but also by village headmen, local intellectuals, “*tutors*” and others who expected their voices to be heard.

Contestation over knowledge and authority was also complicated by the multiplicity of institutions and authorities—chiefs, elders, village headmen, *sous-prefets*, tribunals de conciliation, courts, village development associations—that people could turn to for help in settling disputes. As Christian Lund has argued in another context, “the process of recognition of property rights by a politico-legal institution simultaneously constitutes a process of recognition of the legitimacy of this institution (Lund, 2002a). By the same token, when property holders (or claimants) are uncertain about whose authority really counts, they may seek to protect themselves by appealing to more than one. In doing so, they contribute to the proliferation of parallel, overlapping, and competing institutions that have become a common feature of local governance in Africa

today, and create new opportunities and incentives for debate. (See below, p.97)

IV. The hunters and the state.

Recourse to old methods and institutions is not just a local reaction to current problems. In a recent article, Thomas Bassett described the revival of *donzo ton*, or Mande hunters' associations, in Cote d'Ivoire, following the end of that country's postcolonial economic expansion and Houphouet's 30 year rule. As Cote d'Ivoire's declining economy led to rising rates of crime, Mande hunters (*donzow*) were engaged as security guards, first to curtail cattle theft and banditry in the countryside, and later in urban areas as well.⁽⁶⁾ Encouraged by their initial successes in catching cattle thieves, the *donzo ton* expanded their agenda. In 1992, for example, they founded their own NGO, Afrique Environnemental, dedicated to the preservation of wild animals and their natural habitats. By 1995, the hunters' associations had attracted the attention of President Bedie, who recruited *donzow* as election guards, and urged Mande voters to support his re-election. When colleagues warned that his rapprochement with the hunters could backfire, however, Bedie abandoned his overtures to the *donzow*, and shifted to an attack on his predecessor's liberal policies towards immigration.⁽⁷⁾

When the Ivorian economy was growing, Bedie argued, it might make sense to recruit labor from neighboring countries, but in the straitened circumstances of the 1990s, Ivorians' needs must come first. Playing broadly to popular anxieties over land shortages and declining incomes, Bedie sought to mobilize Ivorian sentiment against immigrants. Voting rights were made conditional on "Ivorite," or biological descent from Ivorian parents, and Bedie attempted to disqualify his principal rival, Alassane Ouattara, from standing for election on the grounds that Ouattara's parents came from Mali. When land registration was introduced in 1997, at the behest of the World Bank, the principle of "autochthony" was extended to regions within Cote d'Ivoire, as well as outside its borders. Only "autochtones" of a particular region could register as owners of land there. The *donzo ton* were ordered to confine their activities to their "original sphere" in northern Cote d'Ivoire, and limit them to private security work. They re-emerged on the national scene for a brief time under General Guei, but were suppressed again by Gbagbo, after some *donzow* offered protection to Ouattara during the coup that overthrew Guei. Harassed by Gbagbo's police, *donzow* abandoned security work and retreated from the political scene. By 2001, they were left with a stark choice between hunting, which was illegal, and unemployment.

Like those of Basarwa activists in Botswana and *axosu* in Benin, the volatile fortunes of the *donzo ton* underscore the power and the precariousness of local identity in the context of market liberalization. Efforts to clarify the social and spatial coordinates of "local" communities for purposes of development planning and administrative reform have often worked to create new divisions among poor or ordinary people, which undermine rather than "empower" their chances of meaningful participation in resource management and political decision

making. Appeals to history or “tradition” as frameworks for legitimizing ordinary people’s claims to power and resources produce ambiguous results. As African economies stagnate, competition over limited resources intensifies, and people struggle to find openings for meaningful political participation. Under such stressful conditions, seemingly mundane issues such as demarcating the boundary between one “terroir” and another, or deciding who “belongs” to a given community, become fraught with tension, inviting questions about relevant precedents, and heightening the uncertainty of potential answers. Both endlessly malleable and terminally divisive, the politics of “autochthony” underscore the importance and the fragility of “local” entitlements as a basis for development and democratization.

ASANTE FORESTS: SEARCHING FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

I. Indirect rule, land and the politics of evidence.

If debates over locality and belonging have arisen with new intensity in the context of privatization and decentralization, they are hardly unique to the present era. During the colonial period, the daily practices of indirect rule created both opportunities and incentives for Africans to make claims to resources and authority in terms of custom and local origin. Unlike donor institutions today, which insist on setting policy agendas for African governments but disclaim responsibility for implementing them, on the grounds that they must respect their national sovereignty, colonial regimes considered themselves conquerors, entitled to rule as well as profit from their appropriated domains. In doing so, they both asserted the right to exploit African resources for their own benefit, and assumed responsibility for governing the territories and peoples that produced them.

This proved to be no small task. Most colonial officials were quite prepared to use force to maintain order and impose their will on subject populations, but they also had to pay their way from local sources. To minimize the costs and complications of governing large and unfamiliar domains, officials resorted to indirect rule, working through existing structures of authority and “customary” rules, rather than relying solely on force. To make indirect rule work, administrators needed to know what the customs were, and to find out they had to ask. In short, colonial regimes were dependent on their “subjects” not only to furnish the goods, money and manpower which they needed to sustain the work of colonial government, but also to tell them how to go about it. “Who’s local here?” was as pertinent and as vexed a question in 1900 as it was in the 1990s.

Asante is a case in point. When British forces occupied Kumase in 1896, they abolished the central monarchy, but retained the extensive system of pre-colonial chiefly offices as a framework for their own colonial administration. According to the colonial reading of Asante custom, every Asante was subject to someone, and Asante lands belonged to one chiefly office or another. Admin-

istering Asante lands and subjects was therefore a matter of determining the boundaries of chiefly jurisdictions, and working out the hierarchy of allegiances that determined who might exercise authority over whom. These exercises were complicated, however, by the turbulent history of Asante politics, especially during the decades immediately preceding the British conquest. Under the precolonial Asante state, office holders jockeyed for position within a shifting hierarchy, shaped by wars of expansion, internal power struggles, and a complex system of transactions, in which they often traded authority over land and/or people to collect or defray debts incurred through service, or disservice, to the state (McCaskie, 1980; 1995: 56ff). When the British took power in the late 1890s, they found that chiefs' jurisdictions were scattered and divided. A stool (chiefly office) might claim authority over a given piece of land but not its inhabitants and, at the same time, over subjects who were living on the lands of other stools. To simplify and stabilize their own system of administration, colonial officials spent a great deal of time and energy trying to map chiefly jurisdictions, in both social and spatial terms, and line them up.

The effects of indirect rule and colonial land policy in Asante were both far reaching and inconclusive. The principle that land is vested in the stools not only became a fixed tenet in colonial interpretations of customary law, but also survived the end of colonial rule.⁽⁸⁾ Even Nkrumah, who relieved chiefs of most of the administrative and judicial authority they had exercised under colonial rule, never abrogated stools' authority over their lands. His successors not only reaffirmed the principle of stool land ownership but, in 1979, extended it to the northern regions of Ghana, where land had previously been held by the state.⁽⁹⁾ This policy has had far-reaching implications for natural resource management as well as patterns of land ownership and the constitution of property. By endorsing the principle that land is vested in traditional offices, both colonial and postcolonial governments reaffirmed the relevance of precolonial precedents for establishing claims to land in the present. Thanks in part to the interventions of colonial and postcolonial regimes, property and chieftaincy in Asante are grounded in history, and many land claims turn on the complications and uncertainties of historical interpretation.

The resilience of chieftaincy and stool land ownership for which Asante is famous is not, therefore, a symptom of stubborn traditionalism, but a reminder that property is a social process, shaped by the politics of evidence as well as the shifting play of market transactions. In 1912, an official report on "conditions affecting the alienation of native lands in Asante" quoted a senior Kumase chief to the effect that land disputes were not common in Asante because "chiefs generally know their boundaries." Eighty years later, during an interview with the head of the Ashanti Regional Lands Commission, I asked where I could find a map of stool lands and boundaries throughout the region. The official admitted that such a map did not exist, but added that this wasn't really a problem. "Chiefs know their boundaries (Berry, 2001: 17),"⁽¹⁰⁾ he explained, implying that when questions did arise, it was not difficult to sort them out.

Practically speaking, then, competition over land and chiefly authority has

provided a forum for on-going debates in which interpretations of historical precedent play a significant role in contemporary struggles over ownership and authority. Throughout the long 20th century, resource management has taken place in a context of discussion and disagreements about what chiefs, officials, and ordinary citizens “know” about the past, and the relevance of historical precedents for making claims to power and property in the present. These debates set the context for practices of resource management, including the management of Asante forests.

II. Sustainable forests?

Since the beginning of the colonial era, forests have played a central role in Ghanaian economic development. In addition to supplying plants and animals for a great variety of household uses, Ghana’s forests are rich in hardwood species that have proved lucrative as a source of timber for export and raw material for the domestic wood processing industry. Commercial timber exploitation began on a small scale in the early 1900s, then grew rapidly in the 1950s, in response to rising international prices and the extension of Ghana’s road network into previously unexploited forest areas.⁽¹¹⁾ By the 1960s, timber had become the country’s second largest export, as well as providing raw materials for a growing domestic wood processing industry of small and medium sized sawmilling and furniture making enterprises.

By the time the timber industry took off in the 1950s, Ghana’s sub-humid rain forest zone was already extensively planted in cocoa. Introduced to West Africa from the Amazon and the Caribbean in the late 19th century, cocoa cultivation spread rapidly during the early years of colonial rule, especially in southern Ghana, where environmental conditions were well suited to the new crop. By 1910, Ghana had become the world’s leading producer of cocoa, and cocoa continued to provide the major part of the country’s foreign exchange earnings until the late 1970s. Since the crop does best when planted on partially cleared forest land, cocoa had begun to encroach on Ghana’s forests long before commercial logging entered the scene. Together, cocoa and timber fuelled the Ghanaian economy for nearly a century, at substantial cost to its forest cover.⁽¹²⁾

For the state, the long-term decline in Ghana’s forests poses a dilemma. Both colonial and postcolonial regimes clearly perceived the importance of the forests for the long-term viability of the Ghanaian economy, and both derived a substantial portion of their revenue from taxing forest exploitation directly, through timber royalties and license fees, and indirectly, through export and import duties, and marketing board surpluses. For most of the 20th century, therefore, the state’s economic interests were squarely divided between sustaining Ghana’s forests in the long term, and exploiting them now. Individuals and firms faced a similar trade-off, of course, although they may have weighed present and future differently, depending on changing circumstances. Combined with on-going debates over resource ownership and authority (fostered, as we have seen, by indirect rule and by postcolonial struggles over land and power),

the contradictions of both state and private interests in the future of the forests have helped to create a volatile context for practices of forest management.

Strategies for sustaining Ghana's forests have usually involved some combination of protection, through restrictions on forest access and use, and planting trees. Colonial authorities established the first forest reserves in 1911, after a lengthy legal debate that helped inscribe the principle of stool land ownership in colonial interpretations of customary land law (See, *inter alia*, Amanor, 1999; Berry, 2001; Woodman, 1996), and began to experiment with tree planting schemes in the 1920s. Both tree planting and forest protection schemes have taken different forms at different times. The following examples are not meant to represent Ghanaian forest management practices in any systematic way, but simply to illustrate some of the dynamics involved.

III. Planting trees

Encouraged, perhaps, by the success story of cocoa, both colonial and post-colonial governments have made several attempts to persuade Ghanaian farmers to plant timber as well as fruit-bearing species of trees. In the 1920s, the Forestry Department experimented with opening portions of degraded forest reserve lands to farmers, on condition that they interplant young timber trees among their food crops. Known by its Malaysian name of *taungya*, this system was practiced only on a limited scale until the 1970s, when nationwide shortages of foodstuffs prompted officials to revive and expand it. Farmers responded readily to the offer of extra land, but contributed little to the nation's stock of forest trees. Knowing that they had nothing to gain in the long run from expending energy on trees that, by law, belonged to the state,⁽¹³⁾ farmers neglected tree seedlings in favor of their own crops. Some also extended their farms on forest reserve land beyond the plots allocated to them by forestry officials, and/or substituted fruit-bearing trees for the timber species they were supposed to plant for the government. Farmers showed even less interest in planting timber species outside the reserves, preferring to concentrate on crops that promised quicker returns.

In 1980s and 1990s, however, conditions changed. Timber exports revived under structural adjustment, mostly in the form of unprocessed logs. To stimulate domestic wood processing and increase Ghana's share of value added by the timber industry as a whole, the government imposed a ban on exports of unprocessed logs. At about the same time, the Rawlings regime also began a sustained program of rural electrification, creating a substantial demand for utility poles. As the domestic market for wood products expanded, some Ghanaians began to experiment with planting timber trees on private land. The most popular species was teak. Potentially harvestable after 10 years for utility poles or 25 years as raw material for the domestic wood processing industry, teak has the added advantage of being relatively resistant to fire. By the mid-1990s, stands of teak—both small plots adjacent to people's houses, and larger ones in the bush—were becoming an increasingly common sight along

main highways and rural roads.

To learn more about this relatively new form of tree crop cultivation, in 2001, I carried out a small survey among members of the Ashanti Regional Tree Growers Association (ARTGA), a voluntary organization established, with the encouragement of staff members of the local Forestry Department, in 1996.⁽¹⁴⁾ My informants said they had experienced little difficulty in obtaining land for planting their trees. Most had either purchased land to establish their farms, or obtained permission from their relatives to plant trees on a portion of family land; two of them had done both. None of them seemed concerned about questions of ownership, or the security of their claims to future harvests. Those who had planted with their relatives' concurrence explained that "the land is for the family, but the trees are for me." Similarly, growers who had "purchased" land from a chief pointed out that, in principle, the land was theirs to use for 99 years, far longer than it takes to raise and harvest a stand of trees. Since most had planted their trees in the 1990s and were not yet ready to harvest them, such questions lay in the future, and farmers were not overly concerned with them.

If land was not cited as an immediate problem, growers were concerned over how to provide adequate inputs of labor to maintain the value of the trees. Site preparation and planting are done mostly by hand, and the work involved in clearing and planting even a small stand of trees can be substantial. Informants' estimates ran from 12 to 16 person days per acre, depending on the initial condition of the plot. Establishing a new farm is only the beginning, however. Weeds and shrubs grow rapidly in the West African sub-humid zone. They can stifle young seedlings in a matter of weeks, and slow or stunt the growth of saplings even after the latter have grown fairly tall. Tree farms must be weeded, therefore, on a regular basis—preferably two or three times a year. In addition, young trees should be pruned periodically, so that the trunks will grow straight, to enhance their future market value. In short, cultivating teak as a cash crop requires regular inputs of labor over a number of years, as well as secure long-term rights to the trees themselves and access to land they are planted on.

With one exception, the growers whom I interviewed were not full-time farmers. Most were urban residents: they derived most of their income from commercial, artisanal or professional (self-) employment, and had planted teak as an investment rather than an occupation. Since they rarely worked on the farms themselves and, in many cases, lived too far away even to supervise them on a daily basis, growers relied on other people to do the actual work of establishing and maintaining the trees. Finding laborers was not difficult, they explained; the problem was how to pay them.

Like many cocoa farmers in the past, teak growers used family labor when they could get it. Several of my informants received assistance from family members who happened to live near the farm, and helped by supervising laborers, as well as working on the farm themselves. Kinsmen were not paid directly, apart from occasional small gifts of cash to "thank" them for their

efforts, and their status with respect to the farm itself was not clearly spelled out. As one forestry official put it, in Ghana, everyone agrees that cultivated trees belong to the planter—but who is “the planter”? In the past, many cocoa farmers relied extensively on the unpaid labor of their wives and children, who later claimed that they were entitled to a share of the farm in return.⁽¹⁵⁾ Whether such claims will arise with respect to teak farms remains to be seen: growers’ formulaic insistence that “the land is for the family, the trees are for me” may have been intended to suggest that the question need not arise. Whether their relatives would agree, however, was unclear. I did not have a chance to interview any of them independently.

A few growers had also given portions of their land to sharecroppers, to clear and plant teak seedlings for the grower together with food crops for themselves. Once the trees grew tall enough to form a canopy, food crops could no longer be grown on the same land, but for the first two or three years, a grower could avoid having to pay wages by using sharecroppers. Like the *taungya* system used by the Forestry Department to regenerate degraded areas of the reserves, however, such sharecropping arrangements were not very popular. Growers complained that sharecroppers neglected or damaged the seedlings while tending to their food crops, and that the teak did poorly as a result. To minimize such problems, and avoid future disputes over the proceeds of their farms, growers relied primarily on hired labor.

IV. Our problem is money.

Unlike cocoa and other fruit-bearing trees, which begin to yield a few years after they are planted and may continue to do so for many years after that, teak brings in no revenue at all until the trees are harvested, ten to twenty-five years or more after planting. Throughout that time, the grower must either find the means to compensate farm labor at regular intervals, or watch the quality of the farm deteriorate for lack of proper weeding and pruning. Since laborers work on a daily or piece rate basis and expect to be paid as soon as their work is done, growers face a continual “pressure of cash”⁽¹⁶⁾ to establish and manage their farms in such a way that they could reasonably expect to have marketable trees in the future. Most of my informants had invested personal savings in acquiring land and planting their first trees, and continued to meet at least part of the annual cost of farm maintenance out of off-farm earnings. Several had also planted oil palm or fruit trees on part of their land, and sold fruit to help pay for weeding and pruning.⁽¹⁷⁾ Despite these efforts, however, funds were in short supply: growers were often unable to weed and prune as often as they wanted to, and many said they would like to plant more trees, but could not afford to maintain them.

The alternative, of course, would be to borrow, but the cost of credit in Ghana is extremely high. At annual interest rates of 50% or more, commercial loans are prohibitively expensive. Despite their avowed aim of promoting rural and agricultural investment, the Rural Banks do not make subsidized loans to

farmers, or accept tree crops as collateral. One grower who had borrowed from a Rural Bank was obliged to repay the loan after three years, long before he could expect any return from his farm, and most of his colleagues were not willing to take on such an obligation. To encourage private growers, the Forestry Commission created a special Forest Plantation Development Center, and attempted to raise money from international sources, with little success. Touting the virtues of market viability and self-reliance, the World Bank makes few large loans or grants for program support, relying instead on small amounts of seed money, elaborately and expensively monitored, to stimulate local initiative. Other international lenders have followed suit—IDA, for example, does not permit on-lending at less than commercial rates, even for poverty alleviation—and private investors have shown little interest in small-scale farming ventures. After holding out hope for several years that assistance for individual growers might soon be forthcoming, officials appeared to have put the idea on hold. In 2002, plans to establish large-scale commercial plantations on degraded forest reserve lands were under active discussion. Hoping to salvage something from their experience with teak, several of the growers whose farms I had visited in 2001 had shifted their attention from maintaining their half-grown trees, to planting seedlings for immediate sale to the Forestry Commission.

V. Protecting forests

Private tree planting is not, of course, the only approach that has been tried to sustain Ghana's forests. The idea of creating forest reserves was mooted as early as the 1890s, and put into practice a few years later. Others have written extensively on the history of forest protection policies in Ghana, and I will not repeat their findings here (Amanor, 1999). Instead, I want to discuss some of the implications of forest regulation for changing structures and practices of governance.

Timber cutting was practiced on a small scale during the early years of the colonial era, but did not grow significantly until world markets for primary commodities began to revive after the end of the Second World War. From the late 1940s, however, timber cutting grew rapidly. To secure a substantial share of timber earnings for the state, the Nkrumah regime passed the Concessions Act of 1962, vesting all commercially valuable timber trees in the state, whether they stood on public or on privately held land. As the legal owner of timber trees, the state granted concessions to logging companies, and collected royalties from them for the trees they cut down and sold. To implement the terms of the Concessions Act, government developed an elaborate system for classifying timber species, assessing royalties, and monitoring the movement and sale of logs.

During the economic decline of the late 1970s and early 1980s, many Ghanaian timber contractors were forced out of business and exports declined, but investment picked up after Ghana opted for structural adjustment,⁽¹⁸⁾ and a number of timber concessions were awarded to non-Ghanaian enterprises.

Exports, mainly of unprocessed logs, increased, and the profits were transferred abroad, leaving little to invest in replenishing the stock of trees in Ghana. Efforts to stem the accelerating rate of forest depletion by policing the reserves led to resistance from local farmers that sometimes resulted in violence. In addition, many concessions were awarded for trees on private land,⁽¹⁹⁾ creating friction between concessionaires and local farmers, who were not legally entitled to any benefit from the sale of the trees, and rarely received compensation from contractors for crops that were damaged in the course of timber removal. To escape what one farmer called “the operation of loggers and wanton destruction of crops,” he and others sometimes went so far as to destroy naturally regenerating trees. “Putting fire to [the stumps] solves it all.” (Quoted in Amanor, 1999: 68).

Following the turmoil of the early 1990s, the Forestry Department (now Forestry Commission) changed its tactics. Regulations were changed, requiring contractors to obtain farmers’ written consent before they cut timber on private land, and officials began to organize “biodiversity committees” to include local residents in the design and implementation of conservation policies. With royalties and other revenues at stake, government continues to regulate trade in logs and wood products, however, and remains actively engaged in efforts to prevent illegal logging and promote forest regeneration. In recent years, economic stagnation and declining real incomes have reinforced incentives for illegal timber cutting and trade. Complaints about illegal chainsaw operators have become routine, in Parliament and the press, and forestry officials wage a perennial struggle to limit encroachment into the Forest Reserves. Pointing out that officials themselves are hardly indifferent to market incentives, many citizens shrug off government restrictions on access to the reserves as ineffective, if not downright self-serving.

Indeed, rather than an impersonal barrier to excessive and/or destructive forest exploitation, regulation has become a kind of pseudo-market, paralleling but also interacting with legal markets for both land and trees. This is not, as proponents of market liberalization would argue, simply another example of the power of market forces vis a vis the limited capacities of a weak state, but points instead to the basic interdependence between governance and resource allocation. Earlier, I suggested that experiences with market liberalization in the 1980s served to remind the authors of structural adjustment that markets do not function well without some form of government, but it also worked the other way. Market competition may induce some firms to become more efficient, but it also creates strong incentives for people to protect themselves against uncertainty and loss by acquiring power and using it to limit competition and control the terms on which they do business. The use of power to shape market conditions is not a social aberration peculiar to bureaucrats and politicians, but a basic concomitant of economic activity, just as mobilizing and allocating resources is part of the business of governing.

Like many other sectors of Africa’s structurally adjusted economies, forest protection measures in Ghana illustrate the mutual influence, and interdepen-

dence, between governance and economy. Regulatory activities, like successful business enterprises, attract imitators. If a state agency, such as the Forestry Commission, succeeds in generating and collecting rent by regulating the conditions of timber exploitation, either legally in the form of royalties or illegally as bribes, others are likely to try their hand at it. Competition among state agencies, or individual officials, is commonplace, as actors vie for revenue and prestige in both formal and informal venues. In 2001, for example, following a recent decision to raise the Forestry Commission's statutory share of timber royalties from 10% to 60%, the Office of Stool Lands Administration was lobbying vigorously for a similar increase in the proportion of stool land revenues that it was allowed to retain "for administrative expenses."⁽²⁰⁾

But imitators do not arise only from within state institutions: they may operate entirely outside formal channels of government authority, or act in both official and unofficial capacities at once. State efforts to protect Ghana's forests by limiting access to forest reserves and/or regulating transactions in forest products have led, in part, to a proliferation of regulators, as illustrated by the following anecdote.

In 1994, I lived for a couple of months in a rural Asante town, collecting information for a study of land claims in Asante Region. Walking through town one day, I came upon a large, untidy heap of roughly cut slabs of timber piled haphazardly by the road in front of the chief's palace. When I asked a group of bystanders where the wood came from, I was told that someone had been trying to move it without the proper permit, and it had been impounded.

The explanation seemed plausible, but incomplete. The Forestry Department had an office on the other side of town—so what were the logs doing in front of the chief's palace? "Who impounded them?" I asked, after a moment's reflection. "Oh," said a bystander, offhandedly. "It was the chief's forest guards."

Under current statute, traditional rulers may engage in timber cutting, or any other form of legitimate business activity, in their personal capacity, but they have no authority either to make rules regulating the use or sale of forest resources, or to enforce rules made by the government. In this case, the chief may have been acting as a kind of *amicus curiae*, hoping to gain recognition as a good citizen, committed to upholding the law and ready to assist state officials in the work of enforcing it. Whatever his intent, in effect he was positioning himself, and his office, as a kind of parallel, or shadow, bureaucracy—simultaneously engaged in the state-approved work of market regulation, and acting as an independent authority. In postcolonial Ghana, where traditional rulers walk a delicate tightrope between their formal status as cultural artifacts, and their active pursuit of wealth and influence through informal channels, the invention of "the chief's forest guards" suggests a balancing ability of some finesse.

By itself, a heap of wood chunks by a rural roadside is of little importance, but this incident illustrates a pattern that is widespread and, I think, underplayed in recent analyses of state capacity and governing practices in contemporary

Africa. Partly under the aegis of indirect rule, but also through the ups and downs of political competition and changes of regime in the postcolonial period, authorities have proliferated, at national and regional as well as local levels of social interaction. As each new regime seeks to establish and consolidate its power by reorganizing or replacing old institutions and agents with new ones, those threatened with loss of power look for ways to protect themselves, continuing to claim or aspire to roles in the ordering of social interactions and relationships, whether or not they are formally recognized as state employees or legitimate social actors, and others emerge to join the fray. Examples are legion: to the accumulation of state institutions left over from the colonial era and/or created by successive postcolonial regimes, recent years have added soaring numbers of NGOs, fed by a growing demand for sub-contractors and consultants in the age of market liberalization, together with new or refurbished professional organizations, citizens' lobbies, grassroots associations, political parties, and "traditional" offices and institutions. In 1992, in one small rural district in eastern Zimbabwe, Sam Moyo found eleven state agencies, fifteen NGOs and eight local councils, plus an unspecified number of chiefs, village headmen, spirit mediums, traditional healers, gardening groups and others, all claiming to play a role as "land management institutions." (Moyo, 1995: 190ff)

Some "authorities" are self-consciously new, others claim ancient provenance—but dividing them into "modern" and "traditional" is beside the point (Herbst, 2000).⁽²¹⁾ As Christian Lund has argued, in another context, authority derives in part from usage: when people appeal to an office or institution to validate a claim, settle a dispute, or chart a course of action, the process of making the appeal tends to affirm the authority of the one(s) appealed to. (Lund, 2002a) In other words, the process of authorization works to authorize the authorizer, as well as the thing authorized.

As Lund's own studies attest, this dynamic may operate in many social and institutional venues at one time, contributing to the consolidation of power and authority in some cases, and the proliferation of authorizing agents and institutions in others. In the present context of internationally mandated pressures for market liberalization, combined with Africans' continuing struggles to sort out basic questions of governance and political participation following the upheavals of colonial conquest and rule, institutions often proliferate, creating complex mosaics of authorization and conflict that defy ready classification. As the example of "the chief's forest guards" suggests, this argument helps to explain what is sometimes referred to, misleadingly, as the resilience of traditional rule in modern African nations. Trading on the symbolic appeal of ancient precedent and cultural "authenticity," holders of traditional office may seek to strengthen their positions, vis a vis the state and one another, by exercising *de facto* authority that they do not hold *de jure*. In the process, they join numerous other aspiring competitors in the political marketplace of contemporary governance, and some gain reputations for achievement that lend legitimacy to their claims.

In Asante, these claims have recently gained the attention of the World Bank.

Engaged in its own, on-going search for self-supporting “partners” in the project of market liberalization, in 2002, the Bank launched a pilot project, “Promoting Partnerships with Traditional Authorities,” to build governing capacity among Asante’s traditional rulers. According to preliminary reports, the project intended, *inter alia*, to promote transparency and accountability by distributing personal computers to senior chiefs and teaching them to use spreadsheets to keep track of their revenues and expenditures. Unaware, perhaps, of Asante chiefs’ long history of successfully eluding both popular and official demands for financial oversight, the Bank’s proposal does not discuss the possibility that information technology might be used for the same purpose—or comment on any possible resemblance between “promoting partnerships with traditional authorities” and indirect rule.

CONCLUSION

The proliferation of regulatory agencies in forest management and many other fields of governing practice run counter to the common tendency to assume that localities are stable, bounded arenas of social, economic and political interaction, with clearly defined “interests” and capacities for self regulation. If as I have argued here, such assumptions underlie many contemporary schemes to promote equitable and sustainable development by formalizing local ownership and delegating authority and responsibility to “communities” and local governments, it is important to look closely at the processes involved. To understand the implications of privatization and decentralization for resource management, we might begin by recognizing that localities have histories; that “local empowerment” can be exclusionary or divisive rather than enabling; and that processes of governing are built, *inter alia*, on struggles over resources and debates over knowledge and historical precedent that need to be analytically accounted for, rather than praised or condemned en bloc, as agents of, or obstacles to, sustained and equitable development.

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NOTES

- (1) Aid to African governments declined in the 1990s in part because funds were diverted to promote privatization in eastern Europe and Russia following the collapse of the former Soviet bloc.
- (2) Note that privatization is not the same as individualization. Firms, NGOs, communities,

and social groups that choose to incorporate are treated in many countries as jural individuals, both in law and in economic and policy analysis.

- (3) Classic formulations of this argument include Ranger (1983) and Chanock (1985).
- (4) The similarity to indigenous groups in Canada who call themselves First Nations, underscores the international appeal of such configurations.
- (5) Similar land and labor arrangements were common in the cocoa farming areas of south-western Nigeria and, more recently, in Cote d'Ivoire. Chauveau uses the term *tutorat* to denote relations of clientage between local farmers and immigrants (Chauveau, 2000). Similar arrangements were common in the Nigerian cocoa belt before the oil boom of the 1970s.
- (6) Their effectiveness was popularly attributed to their possession of special medicines which protected them from bullets and other conventional weapons. Bassett quotes an Ivorian policeman who said that when he and his colleagues arrested *donzow*, they did not try to tie them up, but instead undressed them in order to remove their amulets (Bassett, 2003: 23).
- (7) Bedie's associates pointed to the *kamajor*, hunters' associations in Sierra Leone who were originally mobilized to help defend rural communities from terrorist guerrillas during Sierra Leone's civil war, but eventually became a guerrilla force in their own right, preying on the rural populations they were supposed to protect. See, e. g., Reno (1998).
- (8) In Ghanaian legal parlance, traditional offices are said to hold allodial, or ultimate, title to land. Land may be allocated to individuals or firms under long term (50 or 99 year) leaseholds, but ultimate title remains with the stool. Whether stools can exercise any effective claim to land that has been "sold" to long-term leaseholders—and on whose behalf they do so—has been the subject of much debate among both scholars and legal practitioners. See, e.g., Woodman (1996).
- (9) When the Northern Territories were annexed to the Gold Coast Colony and Protectorate, in 1905, land was declared to be the property of the Crown. After independence, it became the property of the state until 1979, when the Constitution of the Third Republic extended the principle that "land is vested in the appropriate stool or skin" to the northern regions.
- (10) The chief who spoke these words in 1912 was one of the few among his peers who could converse with colonial officials in their own language. An astute businessman and politician, he occupied his stool for nearly five decades, during which time he worked tirelessly to turn customary prerogatives to legal and financial advantage, and vice versa. See also McCaskie (1976; 2000).
- (11) Amanor provides an excellent review of the history of forest exploitation in Ghana during the 20th century in Amanor (1999).
- (12) Estimated to cover one-third of Ghana's territory at the turn of the century, forests had dwindled to less than 10% by the 1980s. Agyeman (1994).
- (13) Since 1962, all marketable species of timber trees in Ghana have belonged to the state. See below, p.91.
- (14) In 2001, ARTGA had over 700 members, an office in the center of Kumasi, and a nursery outside the city on the main road to Accra that supplied stumps and seedlings to both individual and institutional growers. In addition to helpful discussions with ARTGA officers, I interviewed 16 individual growers, and visited 10 farms located in different parts of Ashanti Region. I am grateful to the Secretary of ARTGA, Mr. A. Agyemang and members of the Executive Board, and to the individual growers who shared their experiences with me and, in several cases, spent considerable time taking me to visit their farms.
- (15) The literature on this topic is too extensive to cite, but see, e. g., Okali (1983), Mikell

- (1986), Allman & Tashjian (2000).
- (16) I have borrowed this phrase, with admiration, from Arhin (1977).
 - (17) Some farmers gave plots to tenants, to plant food crops among the young trees—a kind of private taungya arrangement, with many of the same problems. Others interplanted teak with fruit trees—citrus, avocado, cashew.
 - (18) As basic international trade theory would predict, foreign investment was concentrated in natural resource extractive industries, where Ghana's short-term comparative advantage was obvious, and investors could expect quick returns. Between 1983 and 1994, minerals (mostly gold) and timber combined rose from 25% to 60% of the total value of merchandise exports (Aryeetey et al., eds. 2000: 179).
 - (19) Under the Concessions Act of 1962, all timber trees in Ghana are vested in the state, to manage "in trust for the stools." By implying that stools hold allodial rights to trees, as well as land, this law "effectively denied farmers rights to economic benefits from timber trees on their land," and sharpened contention between chiefs and state over the division of timber revenues (Amanor, 1999: 65).
 - (20) The Office of the Stool Land Administrator is responsible for collecting "customary" rents and royalties, and remitting them to the Traditional Council to which they are due. As of 2002, the Office was allowed to deduct 10% of the amounts collected to cover its administrative expenses.
 - (21) In describing traditional chiefs as reactionary political actors bent on exploiting the weakness of contemporary African states to withstand the forces of modernization, Herbst seems to me to be completely misreading the history of political and economic transformations in Africa under colonial and postcolonial rule.

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