



**Reinventing African Chieftaincy  
in the Age of AIDS, Gender,  
Governance, and Development**

Edited by Donald I. Ray, Tim Quinlan,  
Keshav Sharma, and Tacita A.O. Clarke

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## **Preface**

Donald I. Ray

Project Leader, TAARN/IDRC Project International Co-ordinator,  
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We, the authors of this book, were drawn together by our belief that one of Africa's indigenous human resources for development, i.e., traditional authorities, was being overlooked, if not rejected, because of the misconceptions held by some policy-makers and researchers in African post-colonial states and elsewhere. We were puzzled by the anti-chief railings, especially in light of the realities on the ground that were experienced in Ghana, South Africa, and Botswana. We saw that some chiefs in those three post-colonial countries were active in development but some appeared not to be involved. We asked ourselves if these active chiefs were part of some larger trend that had been somehow overlooked during the aftermath of independence. Independence had truly been a wonderful achievement that ended European colonialism, but of course new problems had emerged that then had to be addressed. During this time, traditional leaders fell from sight and often from the political grace of the nationalists who had achieved independence. This was also a time when

the now independent African states had to face the challenges of transforming colonial bureaucracies, armies, police forces, economies, etc., into democratic post-colonial states and economies. The way turned out to be much harder than expected: these included, *inter alia*, military coups, corruption that in some cases bled the country's finances dry and impoverished the people, an inherited state governing ethos of the colonial state, economies undermined and distorted by the European-controlled slave trade, colonialism, and now new forms of imperialism (see, for example, the prophetic words of Fanon 1963 and 1967; Nkrumah 1965; Rodney 1972 or Saul 2005), revolutions, and elections betrayed. Having seen and often having experienced some of these from a variety of perspectives, we the authors of this book began to realize that we had a common interest in the potential that African chiefs might have in promoting (or hindering) development. We had no illusions that traditional leaders would or could "save" Africa, any more than the civilian and military leaders of the post-colonial African states would, but we did have a sense that traditional leaders represented an overlooked and underused indigenous human resource in some or perhaps many sub-Saharan African states that might well contribute to development.

We first came together as the Traditional Authority Applied Research Network (TAARN) when we founded TAARN at the end of the Conference on the Contribution of Traditional Authority to Development, Democracy, Human Rights and Environmental Protection: Strategies for Africa, held in Accra, Ghana, on 2–4 September 1994, and 4–6 September in Kumasi at the National House of Chiefs. All the papers at the conference were published in their original draft in a limited edition (Arhin, Ray, van Rouveroy 1995). Selected revised and edited papers were later published (Ray and van Rouveroy, 1996): these gave us further opportunities to continue our conversations about traditional authority and to build TAARN. The 1994 conference also marked our initial partnering with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

In July and August 1997, Donald Ray (University of Calgary, Canada) visited South Africa as an Overseas Research Fellow of the South African Human Sciences Research Council at the invitation of Tim Quinlan (University of Durban-Westville, later renamed as part of the University of KwaZulu-Natal). Ray and Quinlan agreed to apply for a major research project examining chiefs and development in South Africa and Ghana. In

September 1997, Ray helped organize the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) symposium on Traditional Leadership and Local Government that was held in Gaborone, Botswana (Ray, Sharma, and May-Parker 1997). At this CLGF symposium, Ray and Keshav Sharma (University of Botswana) began discussions for Botswana colleagues to join the proposed project. Discussions with Ghanaian colleagues continued. Following further consultations between Ghanaian, Botswana, South African, and University of Calgary colleagues, we decided to apply to IDRC for a major research grant for TAARN to investigate what chiefs in Ghana, Botswana, and South Africa were actually doing with regard to development. Following rigorous application and refereeing processes, TAARN was awarded a major research grant from IDRC (IDRC Project Number 003927).

We then assembled country research teams in South Africa, Botswana, and Ghana with a co-ordination centre located at the TAARN headquarters at the University of Calgary (Canada). The South Africa team, led by Tim Quinlan, hosted the first initial organizing TAARN/IDRC workshop at what was then the University of Durban-Westville, then the mid-term and final workshops at the Health Economics and AIDS Research Division (HEARD), University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard Campus). These workshops were attended by members of all three-country teams, including their team leaders (Botswana: Keshav Sharma; South Africa: Tim Quinlan; Ghana: initially Albert Owusu-Sarpong, later Don Ray). The workshops were key in facilitating our critical discussion of our individual contributions in comparative perspectives amongst ourselves and between countries in West and Southern Africa.

Our TAARN/IDRC research project had a number of outcomes, which can be only briefly highlighted here. There are three main publications that came out of our project: first the 2003 book (Ray and Reddy 2003), second the four-volume final report to IDRC (Ray, Quinlan, Sharma and Clarke 2005), and now third this substantial book. The book will be published in digital form and downloadable via the Internet all over the world, thereby circumventing the costs of shipping and customs, as well as the cumbersome problems of printed book distribution. Thanks to the University of Calgary Press innovations, led by its director, Donna Livingstone, our book will be easily and immediately accessible to any researcher, student, official, politician, chief, or other citizen at any internet-

connected computer on the globe. This electronic publishing builds on IDRC's goal of promoting interconnectivity within the Global South and between the South and the North.

Our project and this book also fulfill IDRC's goal of building research capacity in the Global South as well as in Canada. When the list of this book's nineteen authors is examined, twelve are African (five from South Africa, four from Ghana, and three from Botswana) and six are from Canada. Seven of the authors are female, which is a significant step towards gender equity, one of IDRC's goals and ours. Seven of the authors are junior researchers who are now published: this is a significant contribution to their careers. Thus we have expanded research and policy capacity in Africa and Canada, addressing concerns of the lack of publication opportunities for African and Africanist researchers both junior and senior as well as by gender.

We made our project a true example of partnership, one of IDRC's goals. We discussed our research, argued with each other, always in open-minded and respectful ways. Through these discussions, we enriched each other with our new ideas and experiences from each other's research countries.

Don Ray

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The opinions expressed in this book are those of the authors; IDRC bears no responsibility for them.

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We thank profoundly all of the many people who shared their wisdom with us and who helped us conduct our research: we hope this research has given you another voice to express your concerns.

Don Ray

