



**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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17 The National House of Chiefs – Ghana

Kusi Ankra

INTRODUCTION

The 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Article 49, stated that there shall be a House of Chiefs for each of the regions of Ghana. In compliance with this article, the Chieftaincy Act 81 of 1961 established the Regional Houses of Chiefs. Then, after the overthrow of the CPP government, led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, in 1966, a delegation of five members from each of the Regional Houses of Chiefs met a team from the military government in Kumasi at the request of the late Otumfuo Sir Osei Agyeman Prempeh II, *Asantehene*, to discuss the question of establishing the National House of Chiefs in Ghana with a view to obtaining a united front for the chiefs.

The 1969 Constitution of Ghana guaranteed the institution of chieftaincy together with its traditional councils as established by customary law and usage. The 1969 constitution made provision for the establishment of the National Houses of Chiefs.

As a result, the Parliament of Ghana passed into law the Chieftaincy Act 370 of 1971, establishing the National House of Chiefs, and confirmed the already existing Regional Houses of Chiefs and gave them judicial and other functions. Although Act 370 was passed as an amendment to the statute law on Chieftaincy Act 81 of 1961 in order to bring it into conformity with the provisions of the constitution, Parliament gave the government the power to recognize a chief under Section 48(6) of the Act. The constitutional and legal role of the chiefs as endorsed by the Chieftaincy Act can be summarized as judicial – that is trial of chieftaincy cases, advisory, and research. The House may perform any other duties which are consistent with the laws of the land.

The Chieftaincy Act 370 of 1971 has been the basic law in chieftaincy ever since, with minor amendments. The National Redemption Council (NRC) overthrew the Busia Regime on 13 January 1972 and suspended the constitution but exempted the clauses dealing with chieftaincy. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1979 continued the practice of the NRC.

MEMBERSHIP

The Act specifies that the membership of the National House of Chiefs (NHC) shall be composed of five chiefs from each of the Regional Houses of Chiefs elected to serve a three-year term of office. The National House of Chiefs elects a president and a vice-president for the duration. The House operates and functions through the following committees with specific responsibilities.

COMMITTEES

1. The Standing Committee

The Standing Committee consists of the president, the vice-president of the National House of Chiefs, presidents or representatives of each of the

Regional Houses of Chiefs, chairmen of the Research Committee, the Stool/Skin Lands Committee, and the Finance and Staff Committee of the National House of Chiefs. It meets whenever necessary and as directed by the chairman, who is the president of the National House of Chiefs, at least once a month or at the request of three or more members. The committee organizes the functions of the House and advises the House generally on all matters and also on behalf of the House when it deems it expedient to do so.

2. The Research Committee

The Research Committee is made up of the representatives from each Regional House of Chiefs with one of them as chairman. Under Section 40 of the Chieftaincy Act, the National House of Chiefs is expected to research into the customary laws and traditions of the various ethnic groups with a view to evolving, in appropriate cases a unified system of customary law. The Research Committee had been grappling with this function for several years until the House was fortunate to get *Na* Prof. J.S. Nabila, who is the Wulugu Naba, as the chairman of the committee. He is a professor of geography in the University of Ghana in Accra. Through his initiative, a steering committee of the Research Committee was appointed and with the assistance of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation of Germany, National Commission on Civic Education, series of seminars were organized for the Research Staff at the Chieftaincy Secretariat and National/Regional Houses of Chiefs, and some traditional councils. A pilot project was started with twenty traditional areas to gather information on the enstoolment/enskinment and destoolment/deskinment of paramount stools/skins in the country. Funds were provided by Konrad Adenauer Foundation of Germany and the government through the chieftaincy secretariat. The information was gathered for the first phase. The traditional areas for the second phase have been chosen.

Under Section 50 of the Chieftaincy Act, the National House of Chiefs is expected to study Chieftaincy Declaration forms of the new chiefs before the names are entered into the National Register of Chiefs. The procedure adopted is that the C.D. forms are prepared by the traditional council, duly signed by the president of the traditional council with the curriculum vitae of the chief signed by the registrar of the council.

The forms are forwarded to the Regional House of Chiefs for vetting by its Research Committee and confirmed by the full house of the Regional House of Chiefs and transmitted to the National House of Chiefs for further vetting by the Research Committee and Standing Committee of the National House of Chiefs. The general meeting of the National House of Chiefs has to confirm the approval before they could be entered in the National Register of Chiefs and later published in the local government bulletin through the chieftaincy secretariat. It was observed that the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government (1981–93) published the names of certain chiefs whose C.D. forms were not channeled through the National House of Chiefs with the reason that it was using PNDC Decree 107, which empowered the government to do so. This method created two chiefs in a particular area with its attendant problems.

With the promulgation of the 1992 Constitution, the final approval of Chieftaincy Declaration forms hinged on the National House of Chiefs, except when the security or financial aspect of the particular area called for assistance from the national government.

3. The Finance and Staff Committee

This committee is responsible for the supervision of the finance and staff matters of the House, including preparation of estimates, control of expenditure, and control of staff.

4. The Stool/Skins Committee

This committee studies all matters affecting stool/skin lands and advises the government on legislative proposals affecting stool/skin lands. The committee may also advise the government on the utilization of stool/skin lands. Stool and skin lands are lands held under customary tenure on behalf of the community by their chief. Chiefs occupy “stools” made of wood in the south. In the north, chiefs sit on “skins” made of cattle hide. Both are key regalia for the chief.

5. The Privileges Committee

This committee prescribes the code of conduct to be adhered to by members of the National House of Chiefs.

OTHER COMMITTEES

Under Section 3 of Act 370 (1971), the National House of Chiefs shall be responsible for advising any person or authority charged by the constitution or any other enactment with any responsibility for any matter relating to chieftaincy. It is the convention of the National House of Chiefs to refer such matters to committees appointed by the House to study the issue and advise.

JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS

“The National House of Chiefs shall have appellate jurisdiction in any matter relating to Chieftaincy which has been determined by the Regional House of Chiefs from which appellate jurisdiction there shall be an appeal with the leave of the Supreme Court or National House of Chiefs to the Supreme Court” (Section 22 of Act 370 of 1971). This is a function whose objectives are for the settlement of chieftaincy disputes to bring the needed peace and socio-economic development in the country. In pursuit of this objective, the National House of Chiefs has three sets of judicial committees made up of five members each at a particular time to hear and determine cases with the assistance of a counsel appointed by the attorney general on the advice of the National House of Chiefs.

DECISION-MAKING

All important decisions at the National House are arrived at by consensus or, where these fail, by voting, with the majority carrying the day. It is normal for any of the committees of the House to make proposals and recommendations on issues in their field of activity to the full house, which would take the final decision on the proposals through consensus or voting. This is the *modus operandi* for all of the committees.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

As already indicated, all chieftaincy disputes filed at the National House of Chiefs as the court of first instance are determined by the Judicial Committee. Such disputes affect parties from two regions. Similarly, appeals from Regional Houses of Chiefs are determined by judicial committees. The National House of Chiefs has three sets of judicial committees, made up of five members each at any particular time to hear and determine cases.

The National House of Chiefs has counsel to assist it to perform its judicial functions. Parties to disputes at the National House of Chiefs are allowed counsel of their own to present their case.

There is, however, right of appeal with leave of the National House or the Supreme Court to the Supreme Court against the judgment of the National House of Chiefs. By the Chieftaincy Act it is only chieftaincy disputes in matters arising out of the nomination, election installation, or destoolment of a chief and stool property that can legally be determined by the National House of Chiefs.

Although the National House of Chiefs can offer some advice and assistance in helping to solve land disputes, these disputes do not fall within the jurisdiction of the National House of Chiefs.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The National House of Chiefs has no resources of its own as it is a creature of statute and therefore funded and financially maintained by central government. The resources allocated to the National House of Chiefs are channeled through the chieftaincy secretariat. The president of the National House of Chiefs, the Finance and Staff Committee, the registrar, and his supporting accounting staff manage and utilize the funds allocated to the House. The chieftaincy secretariat also monitors the management of the funds allocated to the National House of Chiefs. It should, however, be mentioned that the individual members of the National House of Chiefs as chiefs in their traditional areas have resources such as land,

royalties from timber, minerals, and labour, which they manage at their local level using their customs and traditions.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The National House of Chiefs normally takes four strategies to deal with crisis situations. The first is to refer the issue to the local paramount chief or the Regional House of Chiefs in whose area there is a crisis. The second is to investigate and find the source of the conflict or disturbance, e.g., the National House of Chiefs at its meeting held on 17–18 March 1983, appointed a three-man committee to deal with Mamprusi and Kusasi conflict. The third strategy employed by the National House of Chiefs is to appeal to the good sense of the parties concerned, particularly in civil disorders and ethnic rivalry so that normalcy can be restored. With natural disasters and food shortage, the National House of Chiefs would mobilize both local and national enthusiasm to alleviate the hardships of the disaster of food shortage. However, the most popular and commonly used strategy of the National House of Chiefs is to appeal to the government of the day to intervene or help curb the crisis or its effects.

STRUCTURE

At the top of the institutional organization of chieftaincy is the National House of Chiefs. Section 49 of Act 370 of the Chieftaincy Act identifies the categories of chiefs as: (a) *Asantehene* and paramount chiefs, (b) divisional chiefs, (c) sub-divisional chiefs, (d) *Adikrofo* (village chiefs), and (e) such other chiefs not falling within any of the preceding categories as are recognized by the Regional House of Chiefs.

Except for some members of the Northern, Greater Accra, Volta, and Ashanti regions, all the members of the National House of Chiefs are paramount chiefs. The first president of the National House of Chiefs was Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, *Asantehene* (Asante), with Nene Annorkwei,

Prampram Mantse (Ga) in the Greater Accra Region as vice-president elected in October 1972.

On 8 October 1973, the *Asantehene* was re-elected as president with Nene Annorkwei as vice-president. However, on 8 October 1978, *Nana* Agyeman Badu, Dormaahene from Brong Ahafo Region was elected president with Togbe Adeladza II, Awoamefia of Anlo in the Volta Region as vice-president.

On 10 December 1982, the *Asantehene* was elected as president, with Yabumura Timu II of Gonja from the Northern Region as his vice-president. He was re-elected as president, with Daasebree Akuamoah Boateng II, Kwahuhene in Eastern Region as his vice-president. In 1988 when an attempt to amend the Chieftaincy Act to enable the *Asantehene* to remain president failed (the Chieftaincy Act permits only two consecutive tenure of office), Togbe Adja Tekpor VI, Osie of Avatime in the Volta Region was elected as president with *Nana* Agyefi Kwame II, Nseinhene as the vice-president.

In October 1992, Odenho Oduro Numapau II Essumjahene in Ashanti was elected president, with *Nana* Boakye Tromu Duayaw Nkwantahene in Brong Ahafo as vice-president. Odenho Oduro Numapau II was re-elected as President after serving the three term and *Na* (Dr) Puoure Puobe Chiir VII, Nandom-*Na* was elected as his vice-president.

In 1998 Osagyefo (Dr.) Kuntunkununku II, Akim Abuakwahene was elected as president with Nandom-*Na* as his vice-president. After serving for four months, he died, and Odeefuo Boa Amponsem III was elected to continue until the end of the three-year term. Not long after, Odeefuo Boa Amponsem III fell sick and his vice-president *Na* (Dr) Puoure Puobe Chiir Nandom-*Na* acted. The current president, Odenho Gyapong Ababio II Sefwi Bekwaihene, in Western Region was elected in November 2001, with *Na* Banamini Sandu II, Kaleo-*Na* in Upper West Region as the vice-president.

Thus the presidency of the National House of Chiefs has been dominated by the *Asantehene*. It is also of interest to mention that he is not a member of the House as he feels he would be compromising his elevated position by being in the National House of Chiefs under the presidency of any other chief.

The National House of Chiefs deals with the central government through the chieftaincy secretariat. All government policies and directives

on chieftaincy and related matters are channeled through the chieftaincy secretariat to the National House of Chiefs.

The National House of Chiefs also sends its views and comments on chieftaincy and other matters in memorandum form or physical contact through the chieftaincy secretariat. All complaints or demands of the National House of Chiefs to government are passed through the chieftaincy secretariat, which acts as a conduit from government to the National House of Chiefs.

Although the Regional Houses of Chiefs are separate autonomous units, the National House of Chiefs has assumed or portrays a superior and supervising role over the Regional Houses of Chiefs. This is because there is a right of appeal from the Regional House to the National House. All legal changes such as customary laws must pass through the National House of Chiefs. The names of all chiefs must be entered into the National Register of Chiefs and, by the 1992 Constitution, the National House of Chiefs can accord or withdraw recognition of chiefs. Therefore, in practical terms, the Regional Houses of Chiefs are under the National House of Chiefs, which links up the institution of chieftaincy, i.e., the Regional Houses of Chiefs through the chieftaincy secretariat to central government.

Under the Regional Houses of Chiefs are traditional councils, who come administratively, and otherwise, directly under the Regional Houses and deal with the National House through the Regional Houses. The traditional councils are established by Section 12 of the Chieftaincy Act. Traditional councils are headed by presidents who, except in the case of joint traditional councils, are paramount chiefs of traditional areas. The membership of each traditional council consists of persons shown in the National Register of Chiefs as members of those traditional councils and so membership varies from one traditional area to another because of the different customs and traditions and hierarchy or arrangement of chiefs.

Each traditional council has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and determine any cause or matter affecting chieftaincy that arises within its area, not being one to which the *Asantehene* or a paramount chief is a party (Section 15 of the Chieftaincy Act). However, any person aggrieved by any judgment or order made by a traditional council in any cause or matter affecting chieftaincy can appeal to the House of Chiefs of the region as of right against the judgment or order. In exercise of the jurisdiction

conferred upon it, traditional councils are expected to conduct their proceedings according to customary law.

A traditional council can also modify and change the customary practice and laws of its area if it considers this desirable or the customs are outmoded. It can do this by a resolution through the Regional House of Chiefs, the National House of Chiefs, and a law passed by government.

As already mentioned, most of the chiefs in the National House of Chiefs are paramount chiefs. However, the office of the president and vice-president of the National House of Chiefs are elective and one holds the post for three years and can only hold the post for two consecutive terms. By Section 5(4) of the Chieftaincy Act 370, the president and his vice-president alone should preside over the meetings.

Although the president has an office at the National House of Chiefs, his job is not a fulltime one. The president is, however, assisted by the registrar and administrative staff. There is also a counsel for the National House of Chiefs, and he has a supporting staff of bailiffs, court clerks, and assistant registrars. The National House of Chiefs also has a research officer who acts as the secretary to the Research Committee.

Members of the National House of Chiefs are paid all expenses incurred in respect of their judicial functions from the consolidated fund (Section 58(3) Chieftaincy Act 370 of 1971). In addition, members are paid mileage and sitting allowance for attending the meetings and other functions of the National House of Chiefs. The president and the vice-president are paid entertainment allowances and all these expenditures of the National House of Chiefs are charged on the consolidated fund.

All members of the National House of Chiefs are entitled to the same rights and obligations by law and therefore members of the House recognize each other as colleagues and equals. However, divisional chiefs in the House are not treated like paramount chiefs. For instance, when there is a case affecting paramount chiefs, the convention is to entertain only paramount chiefs on the panel for adjudication.

i. Rules

The National House of Chiefs can and do make rules. Firstly, in accordance with provisions of the Chieftaincy Act, 1971, Act 370 (Part One, Section 4), “The National House of Chiefs may make standing orders for

the regulation and orderly conduct of its business.” The Standing Orders of the House were made and revised in 1986 and then in 1992 in accordance with this provision.

Secondly, in accordance with Section 41–42 of the Chieftaincy Act 370, the National House of Chiefs can make a request to the president, who, after consultation with the attorney general, makes a legislative instrument, subject to the confirmation of Parliament, to modify the customary practices of specific areas. This can be done on recommendations of a traditional council through the Regional House to the National House. This could also be done with the recommendation from Regional Houses of Chiefs (Section 43, 44) or at the initiative of the National House of Chiefs.

The National House of Chiefs can also recommend the assimilation of customary law into common law.

At its meeting held on 17–18 July 1980, the National House of Chiefs accepted a memorandum from the Research Committee aimed at cutting down funeral expenditure. The memorandum was the result of positions taken by the traditional councils and the Regional Houses of Chiefs. However, before this could become law or an assimilated law, the elected PNP government was overthrown and the whole legal process was frozen.

ii. Rule Compliance

The enforcement of the Standing Orders of the National House of Chiefs is done by appeal to the sense of dignity of the membership of the National House of Chiefs.

The Standing Orders are also enforceable through the courts of the land, e.g., when an attempt was made in 1991 to move the National House of Chiefs from Kumasi to Accra, the Ashanti chiefs, who felt that the move was a violation of the Standing Orders, sent the issue to court. Fortunately, the matter was settled amicably.

Legislative instruments enacted on the recommendation of the National House of Chiefs or customary law enacted through a similar process are enforceable as any other orders of the law through the interpretation of the judiciary and executive action. It should, however, be mentioned that, even though the institution of chieftaincy is as old as the Ghanaian society, the National House of Chiefs is a creature of statute. With

the promulgation of the Chieftaincy Act 370 of 1971, it was expected that the National House would exploit its rights and obligations to effect the modification of customary law. However, there were only two short spells of constitutional rule (1971 to January 1972 and September 1979 to December 1981). Although the two military regimes of 1972–79 and 1981–93 exempted the clause governing chieftaincy from the constitutions they suspended, the constitutional arrangements were non-existent for the National House to function constitutionally, and therefore the National House of Chiefs could not make extensive use of the provisions of the Chieftaincy Act. As a result of the lack of continuity of constitutional rule, when the National House of Chiefs made rules that were not backed by any legislative instrument, they could only appeal to the good sense of the people affected by those rules. The National House of Chiefs had no power of its own to enforce those rules. Constitutional rule returned in 1993. The draft amendment of the Chieftaincy Act and the amended Legislative Instrument on Membership of Regional Houses of Chiefs were long delayed.

LEADERSHIP

Chiefs are enstooled or enskinned after going through a vetting system that ensures that the best gets the stool or skin. Leadership qualities such as wisdom, courage, honesty, moral and physical uprightness, and life style that is above reproach are taken into consideration before enstoolment or enskinment. The National House of Chiefs is made up of five chiefs from each region.

Except for some chiefs from the Northern, Greater Accra, and Upper East Regional Houses of Chiefs, all the chiefs selected to the National House of Chiefs are paramount chiefs. In the North, because of the high rate of illiteracy of paramount chiefs and also because of the graduation nature of chiefship, i.e., one starts at some level (e.g., village level) and then climbs through sub-division and division before the paramountcy, most of the paramount chiefs are old. In Upper East and Greater Accra, Regional Houses of Chiefs because of litigation and the fact that the membership includes divisional chiefs, some energetic, educated and young divisional

chiefs are sent to the National House. Each region tries to send the best to represent them at the National House. It would appear chiefs who are well educated and articulate have better chances of representing the various Regional Houses of Chiefs. The National House of Chiefs is therefore mainly made up of chiefs who are professionals, e.g., lawyers, engineers, medical practitioners, professional and graduate teachers, and chiefs holding senior posts in the civil/public service or business. Thus the National House of Chiefs by its composition and the quality of its membership appears to be similar to the House of Lords in the United Kingdom. However, the major source of government authority of the National House of Chiefs is the Chieftaincy Act, which was saved by the 1979 and 1992 constitutions and PNDC L. 42. The National House of Chiefs is a creature of statute and it derives its power and legitimacy from the Act 370 of 1971 and now from the constitution.

The National House of Chiefs is a consultative body with no executive powers. However, it is consulted by the government and its agencies. The members, however, feel that, as the embodiment of the souls of the society and heirs and successors to the founders of the native states, they are competent to ensure peace, stability, and development.

The membership of the National House of Chiefs represents the interests of the citizens at the local level. As the paramount chiefs of their traditional areas, they also represent their people at the Regional House of Chiefs. They represent their people and their regions at the National House of Chiefs.

The National House of Chiefs at the top of chieftaincy administration offers strategic leadership to the people as it is in a position to deal with government and national issues at the very high levels. The House acts not only as a link between the government and the people but also as a link between the people, the chiefs, and the government and political authority.

The members of the National House of Chiefs are affected by destoolable (i.e., impeachable) offences such as insanity, stealing, adultery, selling of stool/skin property, misappropriation of state funds, insulting behaviour, disrespect to elders and sub-chiefs, and imprisonment on criminal charges. Therefore, the members of the National House of Chiefs should be morally above reproach.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships between members of the National House of Chiefs appear always cordial and dignified. Similarly, the relationship between the National House of Chiefs and the Regional Houses of Chiefs should and is normally cordial, except in a few cases of conflict, e.g., in 1980, when there was strained relations between the National House of Chiefs and the Brong Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs over the Nsawkaw and Nsoatre stools, which the Brong Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs had recognized as paramount stools without the approval and consent of the National House of Chiefs.

The National House of Chiefs has no legal administrative supervisory role over the Regional House of Chiefs; yet, because it is the highest chieftaincy body, it has been superimposed on the Regional Houses of Chiefs. Moreover, there is a right of appeal from the Regional to the National House of Chiefs. The view of the Regional House of Chiefs on any chieftaincy and other matters are usually passed through the National House of Chiefs as specified in the constitution and Act 370. This has therefore strengthened the superiority of the National House over the Regional Houses of Chiefs.

The relationship between the National House of Chiefs and the Regional House of Chiefs is cordial and full of mutual respect. The National House of Chiefs continues to seek the views of the Regional Houses of Chiefs on many issues. Similarly, it continues to strengthen and advise the Regional Houses of Chiefs on many fronts. On the other hand, the Regional Houses of Chiefs carry out directives of the National House of Chiefs and explain its policies to the membership of the Regional Houses.

i. Relationship with Queenmothers

Although the personal relationship between chiefs and queenmothers are normally cordial, the National House of Chiefs has refused to have anything to do with queenmothers. As a result of the 31 December Revolution (1981–93) and the activities of the 31 December Women's Movement, subtle attempts were made by queenmothers with the support of the 31 December Women's Movement and the PNDC government to

get the queenmothers admitted into the Regional and National Houses of Chiefs. By a memorandum submitted on 23 May 1990 to government, the National House of Chiefs rejected the representation of queenmothers in the National and Regional Houses of Chiefs on the argument that the institution of chieftaincy does not serve factional interests.

ii. Relationship with Government Political Leaders

The relationship between the National House of Chiefs and the central government is a matter of great controversy. One school of thought sees the relationship between the National House of Chiefs and the central government as that of a master and servant. The chiefs, particularly in the National House of Chiefs, seem to be at the beck and call of the government, receiving varied directives and instructions from the government. As the National House of Chiefs seems to follow and support every government, they have been accused of sycophancy and bootlicking. These observations seem to be justified by some of the activities, comments, and views of the National House of Chiefs over the years.

When the civilian Busia administration was overthrown in 1972, the National House of Chiefs supported the Acheampong military regime. When the Acheampong regime outlined a nebulous form of government known as Union government, the National House of Chiefs not only met the ad hoc Committee on Union government at its meeting held 31 May–2 June 1976 but also supported the concept of Union government.

When Acheampong's SMC I was overthrown, the National House of Chiefs supported SMC II, and when SMC II was overthrown by Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings and the AFRC in June 1979, the National House of Chiefs gave their support to Rawlings.

After September 1979, the National House of Chiefs turned around and supported the elected civilian constitutional Limman administration, and when the regime was overthrown on 31 December 1981, the military regime of Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings, the PNDC, got their approval.

In November 1992, when the presidential elections which gave victory to Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings and his NDC party was being disputed as rigged and unfair, the National House of Chiefs was among the first to pledge their support for the NDC government.

Another school of thought sees the National House of Chiefs as a flexible national institution that puts national interest before any other and therefore can always work and cope with every government. This is attributed to the natural leadership qualities of chiefs who should always compromise to bring unity, peace, and development.

It must be said in support of this view that, although the National House of Chiefs in the national interest supports all governments, it does not support excesses. For example, at its meeting held on 17–19 May 1978, the House demanded and obtained the release of most of the opponents of the Union government who were detained after the Union government referendum. Similarly, at its meeting held on 12–13 July 1979, the National House of Chiefs sent a delegation to the chairman of AFRC Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings to protest against the excesses of the regime, such as flogging, demolition of houses, and harassment of food sellers.

In 1977 and 1987, when there were disturbances on the university campuses leading to their closure, the National House of Chiefs intervened and had the matter settled amicably and the universities re-opened.

In 1992, after the presidential elections when the opposition parties refused to accept the results of the elections and decided to boycott the parliamentary elections, the National House of Chiefs intervened but failed to persuade the opposition parties to take part in the parliamentary elections.

The relationship between the National House of Chiefs and the government in fairness to the chiefs should be viewed taking the following into consideration:

- (i) The National House of Chiefs is a creature of statute and is funded by the central government.
- (ii) Except the provisions of the 1992 Constitution which debars the central government from according or withdrawing the recognition of chiefs, all previous governments had this prerogative and therefore the chiefs in order to survive had to toe their line of action.

The relationship between the National House of Chiefs and government is cordial. The government from time to time seeks advice from the National House of Chiefs on pertinent national issues. The National House of Chiefs also sends its views and comments on national issues to the government from time to time. It is not unusual for the head of state to address the National House of Chiefs.

The government has also on many occasions acknowledged the contributions of the National House of Chiefs. Togbe Adja Tekpor VI served on the Lands Commission. A member of the National House served on the National Economic Board and others represented the National House of Chiefs on the constituent assemblies in 1969 and 1979 and the consultative assembly in 1992.

By the 1992 Constitution, the president of the National House of Chiefs is an automatic member of the Council of State. Members of National House of Chiefs serve on Judicial Council, Prison Service Council, Lands Commission, Population Council, Forestry Commission, and many other boards and commissions and committees.

iii. Relations with Government Departments/Ministries

The National House of Chiefs has a very cordial working relationship with government departments, particularly the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Agriculture, Education, Justice, and the National Commission on Culture. Although administratively the National House of Chiefs ought to deal with these institutions through the chieftaincy secretariat, it has nonetheless developed informal relations with these ministries. For example, it is not unusual for the National House of Chiefs to invite the minister or principal secretary/chief director in charge of finance to brief the National House of Chiefs on the state of the economy. For instance, at its meeting held on 17 August 1976, the National House of Chiefs invited the principal secretary, Ministry of Finance, to explain the annual budget. Similarly, in 1983 Dr. Kwesi Botchwey, the Secretary of Finance under PNDC government, was invited to brief the House on the budget and the state of the economy. This was at its meeting held on 16–17 June 1983.

The National House of Chiefs submits memoranda or through verbal discussion communicates its views on the economy through the chieftaincy

secretariat to the government. The House has also on occasion invited the minister for Agriculture, the executive secretary of Arts Council, and the chairman of the National Commission on Culture to address the House and highlight their policy objectives. The House from time to time also submits its views to these departments.