

Judge, landlord, broker, watchman:
Assessing variation in chiefly duties and authority in the
Ghana-Togo Borderlands

MARTHA WILFAHRT
Department of Political Science
210 Social Sciences Building
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720
martha.wilfahrt@berkeley.edu

NATALIE WENZELL LETSA
Department of International and Area Studies
Farzaneh Hall, Room 304
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK 73019
nwletsa@ou.edu

Word Count (main text + notes and references): 9,994

Abstract: This paper seeks to broaden the framework for understanding the many different roles that traditional leaders play in their communities in sub-Saharan Africa. Using data from an original public opinion survey along the Ghana-Togo border, we find that one of the most important roles of the chieftaincy is to maintain law and order: resolving disputes and keeping the community safe from crime. However, we also find considerable variation what chiefs are expected to do, how effective they are performing their various tasks, and how much authority they wield in doing so—both over their own subjects as well as over local government officials. We explore several potential sources for this variation, finding that chiefs in Ghana, a former British colony, have more jobs, are perceived to be more effective, and hold more upward power over local state officials compared to their counterparts in Togo, a former French colony.

* The authors thank Lauren Maclean, Kate Baldwin and Erin Hern for comments on earlier drafts. This work would not have been possible without the research assistance of Koffi Amessou Adaba, Christian Emmanuel Bruku, Inoussa Darago Najah Ntilam Fobil, Oreoluwa Runsewe and the excellent survey teams at Ipsos Ghana and CROP Togo. Funding was generously provided by the Vice President for Research and Partnerships' Junior Faculty Grant and a College of International Studies Faculty Support Grant at the University of Oklahoma. This research underwent human subjects review at the University of California, Berkeley (#2019-04-12106).

INTRODUCTION

Though traditional authorities have always played a central role in local politics across sub-Saharan Africa, political scientists largely downplayed their role in the early decades of independence, focusing instead on the realm of formal politics. This is no longer the case. Sparked by Mamdani's controversial thesis that chiefs are 'decentralized despots' as well as the turn to electoral politics in the 1990s, which created new opportunities for chiefs to serve as political brokers, political scientists have gradually come to believe that understanding the chieftaincy is key to understanding local politics in many African states. An increasingly sophisticated body of work has turned the field's attention to the role of chiefs as political brokers for the central state (Koter 2016), custodians of land rights (Boone 2014), and as critical players in rural development (Bob-Milliar 2009; Baldwin 2016). Chiefs, this work shows, remain as relevant as ever.

Yet despite this renewed interest, much of the work on traditional authorities in modern Africa tends to be, understandably, focused on specific aspects of the chieftaincy, most often questions of land management, or chiefs' capacity to serve as political or development brokers. This article takes a step back to consider the nature of the chieftaincy in Africa more holistically, focusing empirically on the Ghana-Togo border. We engage in two tasks. First, we ask three inter-related descriptive questions: what is the full range of jobs that chiefs do in their communities? To what extent are local chiefs seen as effective at these jobs? And exactly how powerful and authoritative are chiefs within their communities? We break apart the concept of 'authority' to consider 1) a chief's coercive authority downward over villagers, 2) the downward authority he derives from including villagers in decision-making, and 3) his upwards authority over local state officials.

Taken together, we show that even within the relatively small geographic space of the Ghana-Togo borderlands, there exists considerable variation in the extent to all three of these questions. We pair an original survey of 1000 rural citizens in fifty villages along the border with qualitative interviews with their chiefs¹ to gain insight into the relationship between the exercise and perception of chiefly tasks and authority. Not only do we find notable variation in terms of chiefly duties, but we also find that villagers most consistently view their chiefs through a lens of public order. While there is variation in the extent to which citizens believe their chiefs should manage land or act as a spiritual leader, chiefs are uniformly expected to adjudicate disputes and protect their communities from crime. Yet this topic is considerably understudied, particularly in political science, which has yet to seriously engage with the idea that traditional authorities may be substituting for state courts or agents of law enforcement.² Further, although chiefs are seen as effective on average, we also uncover a surprising amount of variation in the tail end of ineffective chiefs. Finally, we find that while some village chiefs are unanimously seen as the most powerful figures in their communities, others appear to in fact have very little authority at all.

This variation brings us to a second, more tentative, task: why do chiefly duties, effectiveness and authority vary across villages? We derive two axes of expectations from the literature. The first focuses on the structural location of chiefs. We consider the long-term effects of national institutions, particularly how colonial and postcolonial state building efforts engaged the chieftaincy, as well as their subnational location relative to the state. Second, we explore two individual attributes of a chief, notably, his reported relationship with local government as well as how he was selected into the chieftaincy, or in other words, the openness of this selection procedure (ranging from election to hereditary succession).

Consistently, we find that the structural factors explain more variation in our data than attributes of individual chieftaincies. Specifically, relative to their Ghanaian counterparts, Togolese chiefs today are expected to do less in their communities, are less effective at doing these jobs, and hold considerably less upwards authority over local state officials. We also find that in villages located farther away from the state, chiefs tend to have fewer jobs and be less effective at doing their jobs, suggesting that chiefly authority and state power might be complements rather than substitutes. Individual attributes appear to only shape outcomes at the margins.

Our findings seek to reframe the agenda for studying the role of the contemporary chieftaincy in African political life. First, one of our main findings is that a core task of the chieftaincy is meeting bottom-up demand for the provision of order by resolving disputes and addressing crime. Although nearly every chief in our study was expected to fulfill this judicial role within his community, there is almost no literature on the topic in contemporary political science despite its implications for state-building and citizen welfare. Second, we echo recent work (e.g., Nathan 2023) that shows how chiefly performance varies substantially even within a circumscribed geographic space, reinforcing the idea that scholars and practitioners alike should exercise great caution when generalizing across space. Finally, we suggest that scholars “break open” the concept of traditional authority by considering different aspects of the power of the chief; while some chiefs have considerable “downward” authority over their subjects, others possess “upward” authority over local state officials. The implications of this variation matter quite a bit for understanding the capacity of individual chiefs to be effective across issue domains. For example, a chief with downwards authority may have a relative advantage in dispute resolution, whereas a chief with upwards authority may be a better

development broker for his community. Future work would be enriched by considering this nuance.

We proceed by reviewing the dynamic literature on chiefs and traditional authorities within political science, as well as discussing the theoretical foundations of chiefly authorities within the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial contexts. We then introduce our research design and present descriptive statistics that illustrate the variation we find in chiefly duties, effectiveness, and authority. Finally, we present our analysis of how this variation can be explained by both structural and individual differences between chieftaincies, before drawing out a series of implications that our findings hold for the future research on customary authority in Africa.

A RESURGENT INTEREST IN THE ROLE OF CHIEFS

As pluralist elections began taking root across the continent in the late 1990s and early 2000s, scholars began remarking on a ‘resurgence’ of African traditional authorities (for example, Englebert 2002; Mamdani 1996). Traditional elites quickly adapted to the continent’s wave of political liberalization. This has produced a dichotomized view of their role in African political life: chiefs are a legitimate source of social capital for new, democratic regimes (for example, ECA 2007) and are promising allies in local development initiatives (Voors et al. 2018), on the one hand, while on the other they threaten the democratic project and development initiatives by encouraging ‘consensus politics’ and marginalizing the voices of minorities (Mamdani 1996; Ribot, Chhatre & Lankinad 2008). For their part, citizen approval has proven quite resilient to the emergence of new political

authorities. Using Afrobarometer public opinion data, Logan shows that assessments of leaders - traditional and democratic alike - are tightly linked. Chiefs and elected leaders can be thought of, she suggests 'as common players in a single, integrated political system' (2009, 103).

Political scientists have focused their engagement with the chieftaincy in modern African politics in two domains: land management (see for example: (Boone 2003; Boone 2014; Honig 2022), and the interrelated process of the provisioning of public goods and acting as political brokers between local communities and the central state (Baldwin 2016; Nathan 2019; Brierley & Oforu 2021). One stream of this research, largely emerging out of the Southern African context, has fixated on chiefs as agents of the state, highlighting the ways in which chiefs prioritize their own enrichment or advancement at the expense of citizens, most prominently by blocking votes for political parties (Ntsebeza 2005; de Kadt & Larreguy 2018). A second body of research argues that chiefs can advance the interest of citizens. Baldwin (2016), has argued that chiefs can serve as important development brokers, improving the responsiveness of elected leaders to rural concerns by serving to aggregate citizen interests. Public opinion data echoes this logic, with citizens viewing chiefs as having a critical role in promoting development in their communities (Logan and Katenda 2021).

As this literature has developed, political scientists have also begun grappling with the uneven efficacy and authority of chiefs. Arguably, the most dominant expectation is that the nature of the colonial encounter shaped the chieftaincy. In general, the literature has found that colonial practices that most strongly interfered with precolonial institutions (primarily associated with French direct rule) permanently weakened the authority of traditional rulers. For example, Miles (1994) demonstrates a distinct divergence between Hausa chiefs in the

Niger-Nigeria borderlands; while chiefs in Nigeria have largely retained their ceremonial role and remain the premier authority in the village, their counterparts across the border in Niger are clearly subordinate to central state authorities. Other work shows similar enduring colonial legacies on trust in traditional authorities (Lechler and McNamee 2018). Though classically studied as deriving from differences in French and British colonial rule (recently, Zimbalist 2021), others locate structural divergences in traditional authority strength in within-colony variation in the construction of the chieftaincy. Thus, Nathan (2019) shows that chieftaincies that were *invented* by the British in Northern Ghana perform worse than chieftaincies that predated colonial rule. Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson (2014) similarly find that chiefs in Sierra Leone are less accountable to citizens when the British concentrated the chieftaincy in a narrow set of families.

Several studies have also shown that postcolonial differences are also likely to matter. One prominent recent argument in this vein focuses on the role of formal institutions; countries that formally integrate the chieftaincy into their national constitution see more trust in the chieftaincy than in countries where no such formal integration exists. These formal arrangements then interact with physical proximity to the state itself to determine the degree to which chiefs act as a complement or substitute to the state (Henn 2022). Others focus on individual attributes; Bonoff (2016), for example, shows that an individual chiefs' ability to mobilize voters depends on their personal coercive and cultural authority

Taken together, this small but growing literature is beginning to piece together different ways in which individual and structural differences shape the modern chieftaincy. By using original cross-national survey data, we are able to ask a wide-ranging battery of questions about traditional authority that allows us to evaluate citizen attitudes about the

chieftaincy in more depth than most existing work. We introduce this data and the study context below.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY CONTEXT AND DATA

Chiefs in the Ghana-Togo Borderlands

We investigate popular perceptions of the chieftaincy in the Ghana-Togo borderlands, specifically in the footprint of former German Togoland, one of six German colonial holdings on the continent that was split between the British and French in 1914. We sampled horizontally within ethnic groups that lay on either side of the border across two geographic clusters in the north and the south of each country.

In the south, we look at the Ewe. In the precolonial era, the locus of political power in Eweland was the village. Although a few small-scale polities did coalesce, these remained loosely organized and their composite towns and villages retained substantial autonomy (Nukunya 1997:63). Thus, despite the Ewe's cultural and historical ties, rooted in their shared dispersal from the town of Notsie (present-day Togo) in the 16th century, for the most part, the population lacked hierarchical political authority beyond the village. Villages themselves were headed by chiefs who performed religious, military, political and judicial functions, but chiefly power itself was far from absolute; chiefs were advised by a council of elders and could be destooled for poor performance (Laumann 2005, 16-18). As argued by Nugent (1996, 206), Ewe chiefs *gained* authority in the colonial period compared to their more circumscribed authority prior to colonization.

The second research cluster falls three to four hundred kilometers to the North among the Gur-speaking populations. Here we have more ethnic heterogeneity, working in Bassar, Bimoba/Moba, and Konkomba villages. Of these groups, the Konkomba are the best documented. Precolonial political authority among the Konkomba was divided into secular and religious domains. The former was assured by the oldest male member of the village or clan, while the latter was charged with maintaining a community's earth shrine (Talton 2010:16). Similar trends hold for the Bassar (Dugast 1988) and Bimboba/Moba, for whom the clan is the most relevant political structure (Meij, van Bodegom, and Laar, 2008). Although a more centralized Bassar chiefdom existed in central Togo, this remained a small polity and villages to the west – where we worked – were not incorporated, presided over instead by lineage elders (de Barros 2012:257). In contrast to the Ewe, where the colonial state strengthened the powers of the village chief, in these communities the colonial state more often radically redefined the position of chief or created it outright.

The onset of German colonization was a pivotal moment for the chieftaincy. Even though German colonization was quite short, German rule still intervened heavily, particularly amongst the Ewe, where the Germans attempted to centralize authority within villages by strengthening the chieftaincy (Laumann 2005:23). These relationships were redefined again when German Togoland was divided between Britain and France in 1914, when French and British troops drove the German colonial administration out of the colony. While the Ewe and northern Gur-speaking groups had faced a shared fate under German rule, now they fell under two distinct modes of colonial governance as the British and French administered their respective Togolands as United Nations Mandate Territories.

British and French colonial rule has long been schematized as adopting two different approaches to the chieftaincy: while French statist ideologies arguably found more continuity with German colonial policies, the British were eager to *empower* local authorities in British Togoland. This sentiment is seen clearly in the speech of the Gold Coast's (now Ghana) Governor in 1926: 'If the peoples of the Gold Coast are ever to *stand by themselves*, it must be by the gradual development of their own institutions and customs' (quoted in Schuerkens 1995, 126). Indeed, many of the chiefs we interviewed noted that the British colonial state granted a fair amount of latitude to chiefs. Although most chiefs recounted the difficult imposition of tax and labor demands, chiefs were understood to have had substantial authority; 'In the colonial days,' recounted one chief, 'the colonial masters gave a lot of power to the local chiefs ... If the chiefs give an order and you did not obey, and they report to the colonial master you are in trouble ... They empowered the chiefs those days ...' (Interview, Volta Region, 12 June 2019). In contrast, the prevailing view among Togolese chiefs is summarized by one interviewee as follows: 'the French dictated orders that the chief had to impose on the population' (Interview Savanes Region, 19 June 2019). All interviewees recognized that the colonial state gave orders to chiefs, therefore, but there were clear colony-specific trends in a chief's autonomy over how to implement and impose that request.

This is not to ignore, however, the impact of *post-colonial* politics, though in many ways, postcolonial history only deepened the differential legacies of colonial rule (Young 2012). In Ghana, the role of the chieftaincy has been clearly stipulated in each of the country's four constitutions and higher chiefs have an institutionalized body in the House of Chiefs. Although the Ghanaian state has at times intentionally weakened the chieftaincy (Rathbone 2000; Lange 2009:173)—for example, Nkrumah amplified district and regional

political centers at the expense of the chiefs—these efforts proved short-lived. As Nugent (1996: 212–15) documents for Volta region, the state decay of the 1970s and 80s reanimated the village as the locus of local development, allowing chiefs to create a ‘reconstituted role’ for themselves as they helped mobilize local labor and development efforts. The chieftaincy remains a powerful institution in Ghana that is politically relevant both vis-à-vis the state and vis-à-vis citizens; over eighty percent of the country’s land is held in trust for citizens by their traditional authorities, for example (Bob-Milliar 2009). Ubink (2008: 22) characterizes Ghana as an example of *association*, whereby the government stipulates a clear role for traditional authorities in the modern state.

Togo is closer to what Ubink calls *subordination*. The postcolonial state under Gnassingbé Eyadema, and his son Fauré, has integrated chiefs under the political control of the central government. Echoing French colonial policy, government *arrêts* pertaining to the chieftaincy clearly stipulate chiefly functions as a civil servant subordinate to the central government (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996:42–44). In contrast to Ghana, where the early postcolonial state challenged the chieftaincy only to develop a more mutually beneficial relationship overtime, the inverse has been true for Togo. Throughout the 1980s, Eyadema’s regime relied on chiefs for the state’s modernization efforts, reinforcing in the process the idea of a ‘traditional’ basis for chiefly authority; indeed, the country’s constitution stipulates that traditional chiefdoms are ‘guardians’ of custom. However, challenges to the regime throughout the 1990s undermined this relationship, and as the state retracted its support for chiefs—fiscal and otherwise – their authority waned (Piot 2010:6–7). This does not mean that the chieftaincy is now irrelevant in Togo; Togolese report high levels of confidence in their chiefs and view them as important social actors (Ekoutiamé, Amewunou & Kao 2021). But

Togolese chiefs were cognizant of the difference between their own role and those of their counterparts in Ghana, as summarized by one respondent:

‘... when we go to Ghana, we feel sorry for ourselves. Because there is a consideration for royalty [in Ghana]. If the government came now, I'm going to get up. I should rather be seated and the President of the Republic will come and greet me. It is he who must come and knock at the door, and I will tell him to come in ... This is what I told you earlier that the Togolese government robbed the chieftaincy of its power to dominate it. In reality, we are not traditional chiefs, we are chiefs ... when we say traditional chief, this is service chief ... Otherwise, Faure was not going to say that we should come and sit down before he arrives, he is the one who must sit down before we arrive. It's like that. There is a difference’ (Interview, Plateaux Region, 12 June 2019).

Even a small geographic area like the Ghana-Togo borderlands has seen substantial political challenges to the chieftaincy since colonization. By zooming in to one area, we hope to gain leverage on how the nature of the chieftaincy varies today by comparing groups we would otherwise expect to have been highly similar prior to colonization. This research design provides specific analytic advantages therefore, but we acknowledge its shortcomings as well. The majority the area we study was historically acephalous in the precolonial period, with no hierarchical governance structures.³ Precolonial levels of centralization have been shown to be consequential for the behavior contemporary chiefs (e.g., Nathan 2019), but we hold this potential driver of variation in the contemporary chieftaincy constant. This allows us to explore whether the colonial state-building project put the chieftaincy on distinct trajectories, but it simultaneously imposes an important scope condition for our findings: communities that were home to strong precolonial chieftaincies may exhibit distinct patterns of authority in the present that we are not able to capture with this data.

Data collection

One of the major advantages of this study is that it is based on an original survey specifically focused on understanding traditional authority in the broadest sense. Much of the existing literature either uses indirect proxies for chiefly effectiveness, such as measure of public goods, or relies on two core questions from the Afrobarometer: how often a respondent has contact with traditional authorities and how much they trust them. We were able to ask a broad battery of questions about chiefly duties and effectiveness as well as a series of more nuanced questions about their authority. We worked in fifty villages along the border, conducting an original survey of villagers and qualitative interviews with village chiefs. Twenty-five villages were surveyed in Ghana, clustered in Volta and Northern regions, as well as twenty-five villages in Maritime, Plateaux, Kara and Savanes departments in Togo.⁴ The villages were matched in pairs across the border with the intention of capturing similar populations and ethnic composition and were within ten to fifteen kilometers of the border.⁵ We fielded an original public opinion survey in these villages between July 2019 and February 2021.⁶ Within each village, twenty households were selected for interviews by a survey team of enumerators native to the region and fluent in the appropriate languages.⁷ One thousand respondents were interviewed in total.

The survey asked respondents a range of questions. In addition to basic demographics, respondents were asked about life in their villages, the village's public goods, and their responsibilities as citizens. Most pertinent to our purposes here, all respondents were asked a host of questions about their village chief that ranged from their own experiences with the chief as well as their perceptions of the chief's job and his performance. The following section describes three core sets of questions designed to better understand variation in: 1) what jobs

are chiefs expected to do with in their communities, 2) how effective they are at doing them, and 3) how much authority they hold within their community.

Before survey enumeration began, a research team visited each village in order to interview the village chief and/or the elders of the village as well as to ask permission to field our survey.⁸ These interviews asked about the history of the village, what the village is like today, and the village chief's role in managing the affairs of the village. Data from these interviews was systematically coded and is paired with the survey data as introduced below.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE VILLAGE CHIEFTAINCY

We begin by illustrating the large amount of variation in chiefly duties, effectiveness, and authority across *all* villages within the sample. First and foremost, we wanted to understand what ordinary citizens expect from their chiefs. We therefore asked respondents how important six different tasks were for their chief's job: managing local disputes, allocating land within the village, keeping the village safe from crime, acting as a spiritual leader, promoting local economic development, and building a close relationship with local government officials (the District Chief Executive in Ghana and the Préfet in Togo).⁹ Figure 1 presents the country averages for Ghana and Togo as well as the total sample. The full variation by village is displayed in Appendix B.

Figure 1 shows that there is divergence in which jobs citizens ascribe to their village chiefs.¹⁰ We find that managing disputes was the most common job expected of chiefs, followed by a tie between building relationships with the government representative and keeping the village safe from crime. When averaging the responses of all respondents within a

village, for 37 out of 50 villages collectively scored “managing disputes” as the chief’s first or second most important job. Twenty-seven villages collectively scored crime-fighting as his first or second most important job. Further, these two functions are interlinked; crime is often tied to dispute resolution, and if a dispute is not adjudicated to satisfaction, retribution—property damage or violence—may be the result. In contrast, only five villages prioritized the spiritual role of chiefs and in nearly half of our surveyed villages (23) this role averaged the least important. Similarly, in only ten villages was allocating land the first or second most important duty, on average. In 17 villages, respondents collectively ranked it last.

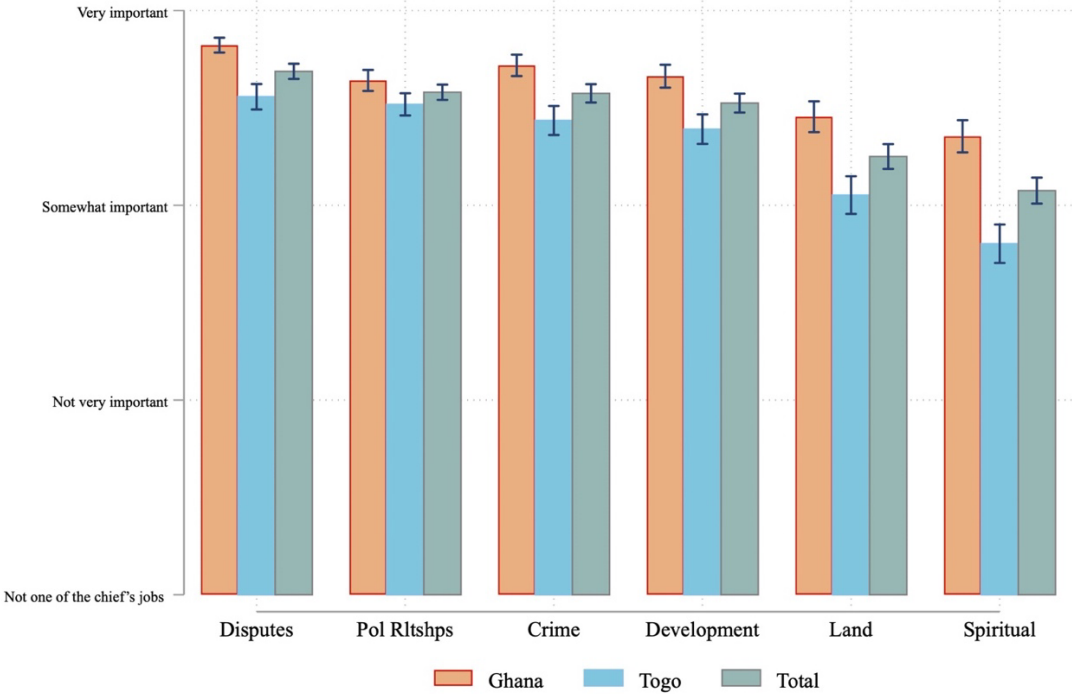


FIGURE 1: Is managing this issue an important part of your chief’s job? Sample averages with 95% confidence intervals. Issue areas listed on x-axis.

We also found that while some village chiefs are expected to wear a lot of hats (their villagers viewed all six tasks as important for their chief’s job) other villages had much lower expectations. Most respondents view their chief as having 3-4 particularly important jobs. In general, Ghanaian respondents expect more from their chiefs than Togolese.

Our interviews with traditional authorities in the surveyed villages echo these trends, as seen in Table 1. Nearly half of our interviewees noted that their core responsibility was resolving disputes or keeping peace in the village; this was the number one job mentioned by the chiefs themselves. A further 37.5 percent mentioned community development as their most important job. Other related duties not asked in our survey include passing information to citizens from the government and holding village meetings as well as more generic responses like ‘solving the village’s problems’ and ‘making sure everyone has a good life.’

TABLE I:
Chiefs’ self-reported most important roles in village

	Manage Dispute/ Maintain peace	Allocate/ Manage Land	Keep village safe/ protect from crime	Spiritual health of village/ maintain customs	Facilitate Community Development	Build/ Maintain Rltshps with Admin/ Politicians	Maintain Public Goods/ Organize Labor	Pass Info/ Hold Village Mtgs	Solve local problems	Maintain well-being of community
%	47.9	0	4.2	4.2	37.5	8.3	29.2	20.8	29.2	8.3

Responses coded from interviews with village chiefs and their delegates. Chiefs often reported more than one central role, each of which is coded into the relevant category.

This is surprising; recent work on the chieftaincy has focused almost exclusively on the jobs of land allocation, economic development, and political brokerage (for example: Bob-Milliar 2009; Boone 2014; Baldwin 2016; Koter 2016; Honig 2022). Yet our data suggest that

only about 56 percent of the population views land allocation as a ‘very important’ job of their chief, and a full 12 percent of the sample says it is not one of his jobs at all. Our qualitative interviews revealed similar trends. Not a single chief directly mentioned land allocation or management as their most important job, though most did report that the most common disputes they were asked to resolve involved land (78.5%).¹¹ Promoting economic development and building relations with local government leaders are also generally seen as important duties of these chiefs, though there is more discrepancy between chiefs and citizens for the latter. While citizens see building political relations as one of the most important duties of their chiefs, only 8.3% of chiefs listed it. Few chiefs or citizens spoke of a spiritual role for the chieftaincy—perhaps reflecting the advent of charismatic Christianity in many of their communities.

Overall, this has important implications for the study of the modern chieftaincy in the region and suggests that researchers ought to turn their attention to the ways in which local chiefs fulfill the *judicial* roles of the state, as opposed to complementing or substituting its *economic* obligations alone. Chiefs are indeed acting as local judges and law enforcement agents more than anything else, supplementing a weak state where formal courts and police stations are inaccessible to most rural citizens.

Second, for each of these jobs, respondents were further asked whether the chief was effective at doing this job.¹² These measures produced many different kinds of variation. On the one hand, chiefs tend to be better at some things than others and this tracks quite closely to how important the job itself is viewed. Just as dispute resolution and crime prevention are collectively ranked by villagers as the chief’s most important jobs, chiefs were also ranked as being the most effective in these two jobs (71% and 65% reported they were ‘very effective’

at these jobs, respectively). In contrast, only 49% of the full sample reported that their chief was effective at either building a relationship with the DCE/Préfet or acting as a spiritual leader.

Not only does the data present collective variation across these jobs, but it also reveals considerable variation between the effectiveness of individual chiefs. The full range in this variation is displayed in Figure 2, where the chief's average effectiveness score for each of these six jobs is plotted in vertical arrays along the x-axis. Each vertical array represents one of the fifty villages. The villages are ranked in order from the least effective chief to the most effective. Although some chiefs tended to rank similarly across all jobs, Figure 2 reveals that in many villages there were major discrepancies in a chief's perceived effectiveness in his different roles. So, for example, while the villagers of one Ewe village in Ghana collectively ranked their chief as being highly effective at preventing crime (79% of the villagers said he was 'very effective'), far fewer villagers said he was 'very effective' at being a spiritual leader (38%), promoting development (47%), or building a relationship with the local DCE (50%). In fact, around a third of villagers reported that the chief was *ineffective* at these jobs.

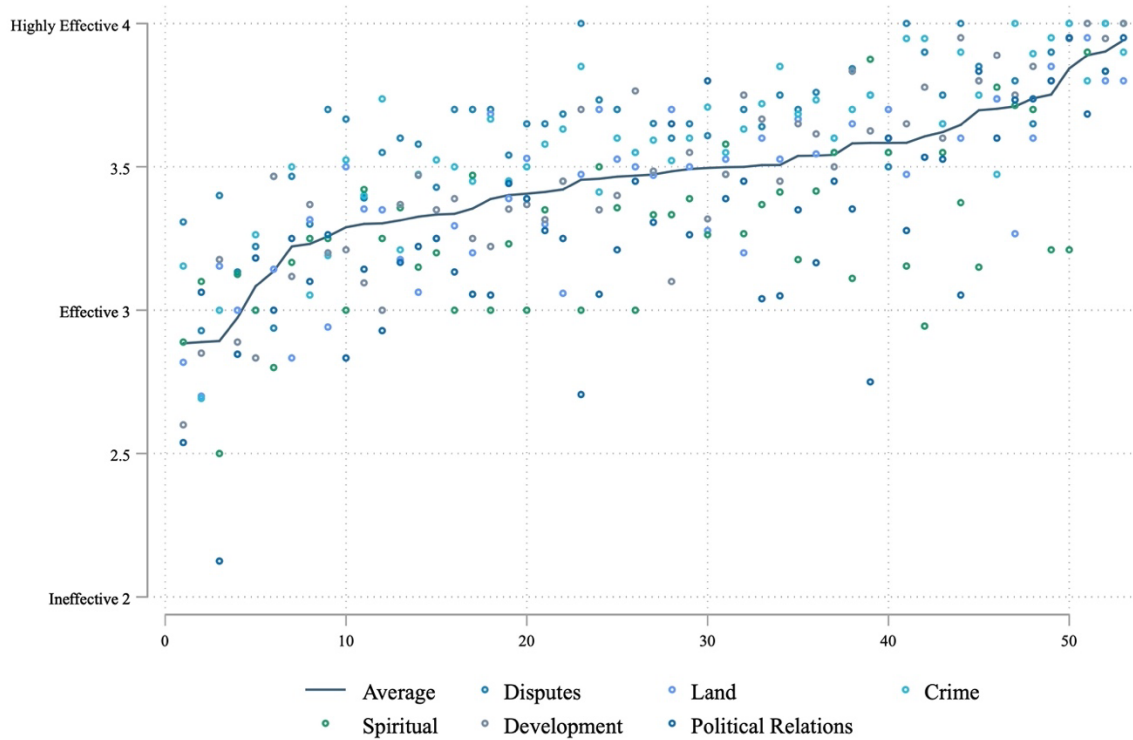


FIGURE 2: Variation in perceived effectiveness of chief by village. Y-axis reports average issue-area and composite scores by sampled village on the X-axis. Responses on a four-point scale range from highly effective (4) to not at all effective (1).

Finally, we also collected survey data on the extent of a chief’s power within his community. On average, chiefs are generally authoritative. Logan (2013: 364) notes this finding when highlighting cross-national variation in the Afrobarometer data. Indeed, in our own data, when asked the open-ended question, ‘Thinking of this village specifically, in your opinion, who in this village has the most political authority?’ seventy-five percent of the entire sample named the village chief. However, the general veneer of authority belies significant variation between villages. On one extreme, in ten of our villages, every single person interviewed named the chief as the most powerful authority in the village. On the other

extreme are eight villages in which less than fifty percent of respondents named the chief. In one northern village in Ghana, only one person of the twenty respondents mentioned the chief—two thirds of the respondents in that village instead mentioned a specific party official, while most of the rest named the village’s assemblyman. Figure 3 presents the village-level average for each village in the sample. The data make clear that the power of the chief must not be taken as an assumption when considering his role and the effect of his role within his community.

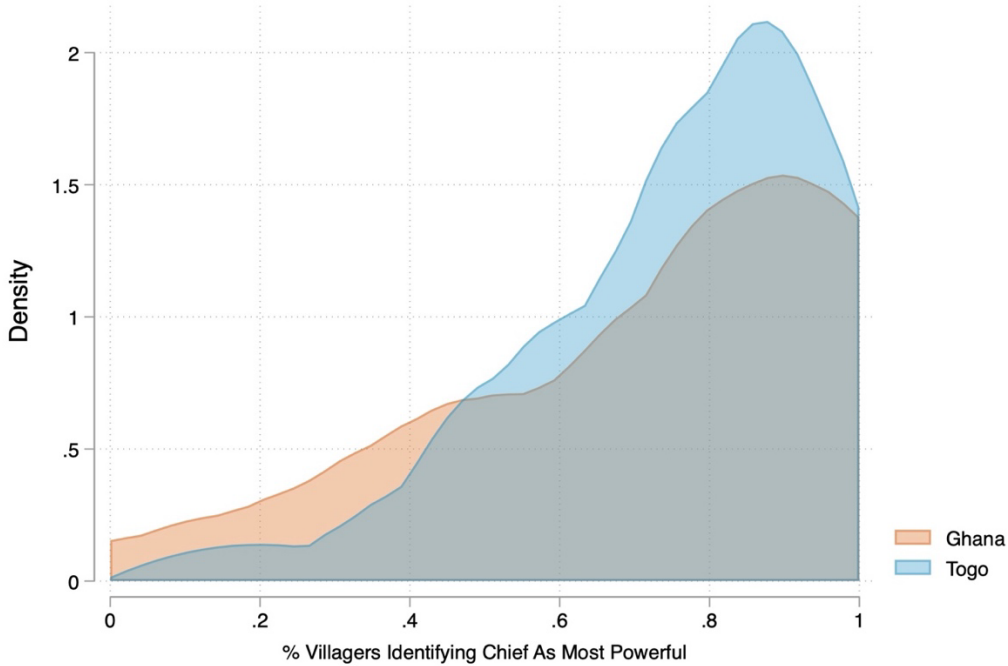


FIGURE 3: Density distribution of % village sample identifying the chief as most powerful figure in village.

We push beyond this generalized question of authority by looking at three distinct types of power that a chief may wield: a chief’s coercive authority over his subjects, the legitimacy that he derives from listening to them when making decisions for the village, and finally his upward authority over local government officials.¹³ The first two measures capture

the main focus of the literature—the chief’s downward authority amongst his own people. Authority over villagers helps us better understand the extent to which a chief can mobilize villagers to, for example, participate in collective labor, vote for a preferred candidate, or obey the rule of law. In general, we find that chiefs tend to have far more downwards authority (both coercive and inclusive) than they have upwards authority.

To measure coercive capacity, our survey asked each respondent, ‘If the chief of this village asked you to do something to help out the village and you didn’t do it, would you be worried about being punished?’ Overall, a sizeable majority of the full sample reported that they would, indeed, fear punishment; 64 percent of all respondents would be ‘very worried,’ 21 percent would be ‘somewhat worried,’ 5 percent would be ‘not very worried,’ and 10 percent would be ‘not at all worried.’ Although the survey doesn’t specify what ‘punishment’ entails, our interviews with the chiefs suggested a range of options. Many chiefs indicated that they have never had to punish anyone because no one has disobeyed them before, but those who had issued punishment primarily cited fines, for example buying drinks, plastic chairs, kola nut, or even animals for the chief, often for ceremonial purposes. For more difficult cases—or when someone refused to pay a fine—village chiefs indicated that the defendant would be passed on to a canton or paramount chief or even the police. Other chiefs (33%) mentioned more informal sanctions—for example, refusing to let the villagers bury a deceased relative in the village,¹⁴ or refusing to help them in the future if they needed something.¹⁵

To measure downward authority derived from perceived inclusivity (as opposed to coercion), we asked respondents, ‘When the chief of this village makes important decisions about the village, would you agree that he takes into account the opinions of people like you?’ Again, most people seem to believe that their chief listens to them, at least somewhat. Within

the full sample, 57 percent of all respondents ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement, 31 percent ‘somewhat agreed,’ and only 11 percent ‘somewhat’ or ‘strongly disagreed.’

Finally, the third form of authority relates upwards to the state. To what extent does the chief wield authority over local government officials? This type of authority has not been considered as extensively in the literature, but is key to studies such as Baldwin (2016), who notes that Zambian elected officials are eager to curry the favor of traditional authorities, who they view as essential for both mobilizing voters and executing development projects. In other words, some state officials may defer to the authority of chiefs, while in other cases, the chief may be obliged to defer to the state. Our survey measures this form of upward authority by asking each respondent, ‘Who is really in charge? Is the DCE [Ghana]/Préfet [Togo] in charge of the chief, is the chief in charge of the DCE/Préfet, or are they more like partners?’ While the previous two questions indicated that, at least on average, chiefs hold considerable downward forms of authority within most villages, when forced to specifically compare the chief to the DCE or Préfet, perceptions of the authority of the average chief diminishes considerably. Only 28 percent of respondents indicated that the chief was in charge of the DCE/Préfet, while a further 26 percent said they were partners. In contrast, a surprising 46 percent of respondents indicated that the DCE/Préfet was in fact in charge of the chief, suggesting that chiefly authority primarily derives from his authority amongst the people in his village, as opposed to upward authority over the state.

Figure 4 visualizes the average level of authority ascribed to chiefs in Ghana and Togo; here, all four measures have been standardized to range from 0 to 4 (low to high) for comparability. Village specific results, located in Appendix B, reveal in more depth the wide

variation in the data. While most chiefs are seen as broadly authoritative, some do so on all four dimensions, while others' see their authority cluster on only two or three dimensions.

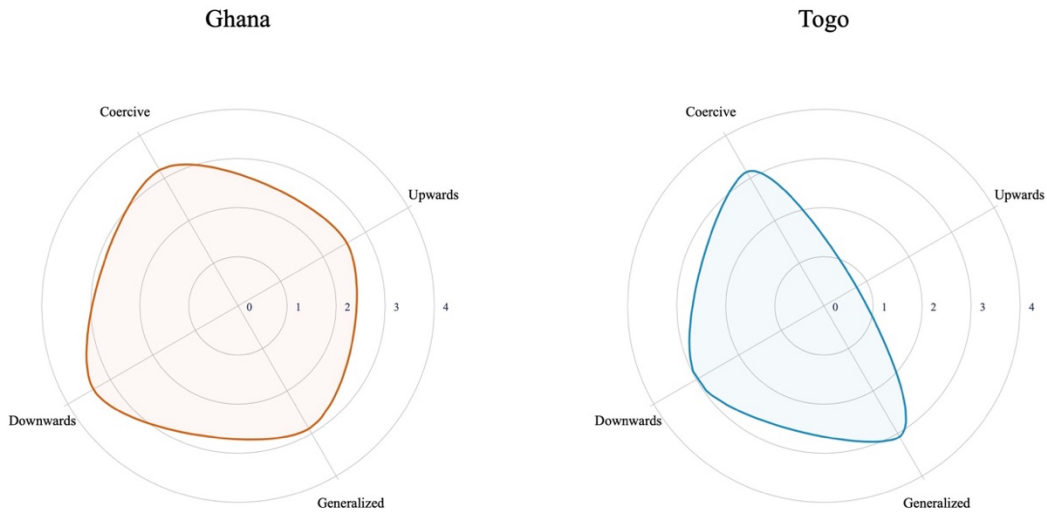


FIGURE 4: Country Averages on all four dimensions of chiefly authority. Question responses standardized to range 0-4 (low to high) for ease of comparison.

EXPLAINING VARIATION IN THE JOBS, EFFECTIVENESS AND AUTHORITY OF CHIEFS

What drives this variation? Though we do not attempt to offer a definitive answer to this question, we examine two axes of expectations in the existing literature. The first dimension pertains to structural factors tied to geographical location. The most well-known set of arguments about structural location are those on the influence of the colonial and post-

colonial states across country borders. If the French were more interventionist with the chieftaincy in Togo than the British were in Ghana, as is often argued, then we might reasonably expect that chiefs on the Togolese side of the border will have fewer jobs and be seen as less effective at these jobs than their counterparts in Ghana. This logic would also expect Togolese chiefs to hold more downwards, coercive authority over their subjects, but less upwards authority over local government officials to whom the French statist tradition subjugated them. More recently, scholars have emphasized how chiefly authority varies subnationally (Logan 2009). If chiefs are *complements* to the state, then those who are physically farther from the state would be expected to have fewer jobs and do these jobs less effectively. If chiefs are *substitutes*, then proximity to the state might crowd out the chief's duties and authority.

The second axis of our expectations pertains to recent arguments about the role of individual attributes of a chief or chieftaincy. First, drawing from Baldwin (2016), we should expect that chiefs who report having a close relationship with government officials should be particularly effective on development related dimensions of their authority and to be seen as being more co-equal power relations with these government officials. Second, following the recent findings of Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson (2014), we also examine the impact of chieftaincy selection procedures. The authors find that economic developments are worse but social capital is higher among less-competitive chieftaincies or where the chieftaincy is concentrated in a smaller number of families. We might therefore expect that chiefs selected through more open procedures (for example, elected by their communities) might be seen as more effective, though predictions about jobs and authority are less clear.

These dimensions are not exhaustive, but our aim with this exercise is to begin exploring the variation we presented in the previous section and articulate potentially lucrative areas for future research. We offer tentative tests of these explanations by looking at whether a respondent's evaluation of their chief's duties, effectiveness and authority covary with (a) whether they reside in Togo or not; (b) whether respondents are from our northern clusters, which are both culturally distinct and are further from coast, where colonial and postcolonial state power has concentrated; (c) the logged distance (km) to the nearest district capital, a measure of proximity to the administrative state apparatus; (d) how strong of a relationship their chief reports having with their member of parliament/deputy to the national assembly (no real relationship, a fine/neural relationship or a good or productive relationship) and, finally, (e) how closed the chieftaincy selection process is.¹⁶ The latter variable ranges from 1-8, where 1 means that the chief is elected among all villagers and 8 represents a chieftaincy that is within a single family with the Paramount or Canton chief choosing who within the family will be chief, an extremely closed selection system. Descriptive statistics of these five measures can be found in Appendix C.

We estimate the impact of these potential explanatory variables on a simplified set of dependent variables, looking at the average importance of all six of a chief's jobs described above and their average effectiveness at those jobs. We present question specific results in the appendix. Figure 5 reports coefficients from OLS models, which include additional controls for the respondent's age, gender, level of education, socioeconomic status, with standard errors clustered at the village.¹⁷ The coefficient plots below present the estimated effects of the five variables described above.

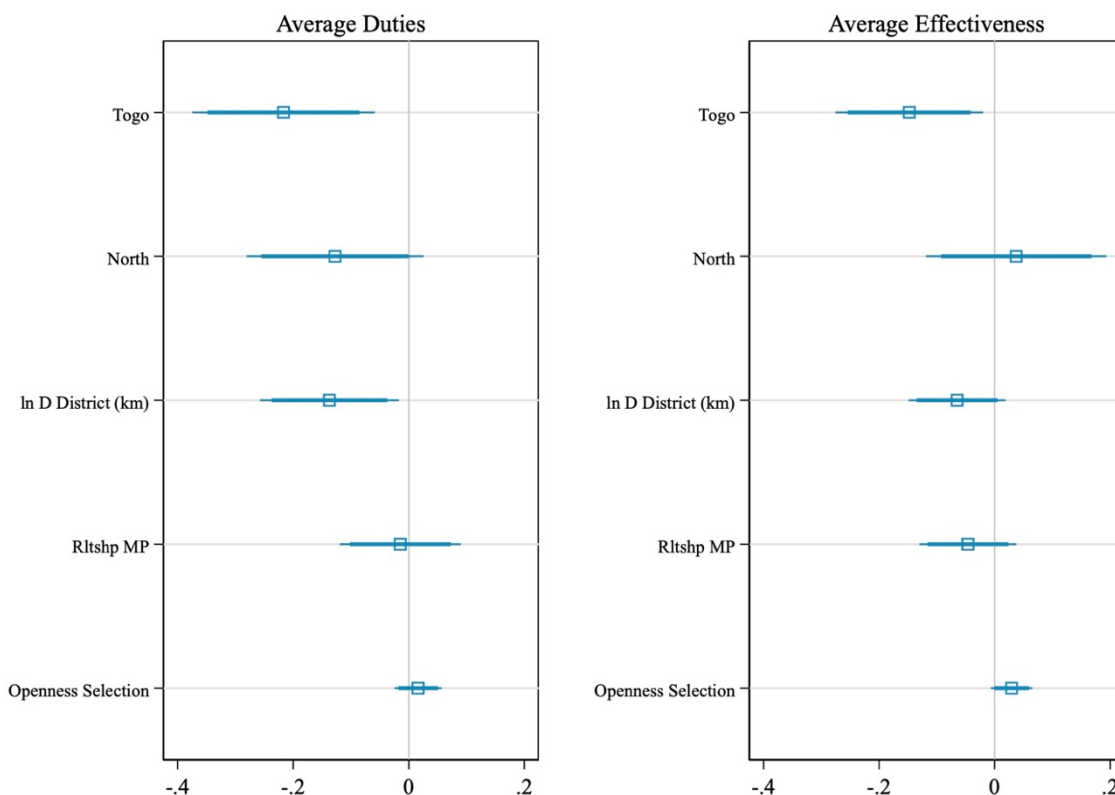


FIGURE 5: Explanations for variation in the average importance of duties ascribed to a chief (left panel) and his average effectiveness at those tasks (right panel). Dependent variable is average score for how important the following are for the respondent’s chief’s duties/how effective the chief is at it: managing disputes, allocating land, crime prevention, spiritual matters, development and building political relationships outside of the village. All responses on a four-point scale. Coefficients are from OLS models with standard errors clustered at the village. 90 and 95% confidence intervals reported.

Figure 5 supports the idea that a chief’s structural location matters more than his individual attributes. Indeed, we find the most consistent difference is driven by what side of the border a village falls on. Compared to Ghanaian chiefs, Togolese chiefs are expected to do significantly fewer jobs. Holding all else constant, the difference in these expectations is approximately a quarter of a point on a four-point scale, equivalent to half a standard deviation, from ‘very important’ job of the chief to ‘not one of the chief’s jobs.’ Togolese chiefs are also perceived to be less effective at doing these jobs. All else held equal, the gap in

average effectiveness across the border is approximately a third of a standard deviation, at 0.14 on a four-point scale ranging from ‘very effective’ to ‘very ineffective.’ These results are disaggregated by composite measures for both panels in Appendix B. The disaggregated results are highly consistent, though a chief’s structural location does not appear to covary with his role in allocating land or building political relationships as a chief’s duty or in his effectiveness at the former.

Even though the communities we surveyed represent similar ethnic groups in close proximity, one clear conclusion is that the effect of living on the Ghanaian side of the border has systematically driven Ghanaian chiefs to be more active in their villages and to be perceived as more effective in doing all the jobs they are expected to do. Interestingly, chiefs who are located *farther* from the district capital seem to do less, suggesting complementarities between chiefs and the state are strongest when they are in closer proximity. We find no statistically significant difference between respondents in the northern and southern zones of our sample. Further, neither chiefs who report stronger relations with their MPs/deputies nor chiefs selected through more open processes are seen as having more important duties or being more effective.

We replicate these models for the authority measures in Figure 6. Here the findings are more ambiguous for our structural variables. Although country does significantly predict whether a respondent views the chief as having more *upward* authority over the local administrator (Ghana) or vice versa (Togo), the only other statistically significant difference is that Togolese citizens perceive their chiefs as less likely to listen to opinions like theirs at the ten percent level and hence as possessing less *downward* authority. Our measure of coercive authority (chief punishes) and outright authority (chief has most authority) do not appear to be

systematically shaped by cross- or sub-national variation. However, the estimate of the country finding in the final model is quite large. On a three-point scale, where 1 represents the belief that the chief is in charge of the DCE/Préfet and 3 means the DCE/Préfet is in charge of the chief, Ghanaian chiefs, on average and with all else held equal, score a 2.60, compared to Togolese chiefs, who score a 1.71. Neither distance from the state nor the individual characteristics of the chief have a significant correlation with any form of authority within these communities.

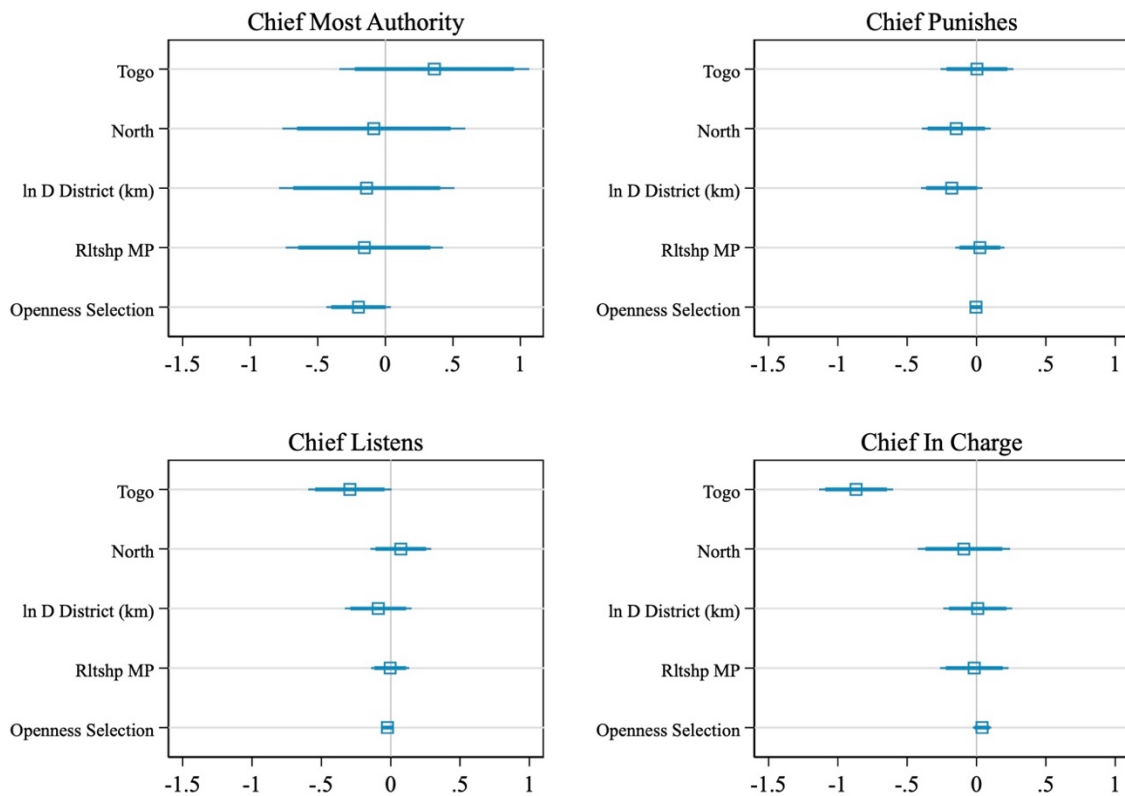


FIGURE 6: Perceptions of a Chief's Authority in the Village. Results from logit (Chief most authority) and OLS (all others) regressions, grouped by dependent variable, with 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the village. 90 and 95% confidence intervals reported.

The data indicates that Ghanaian and Togolese chiefs appear to have generally the same amount of downward authority over their subjects. What substantively differentiates

them is their relationship with local government. These findings are interesting given the widespread tendency of the chiefs we interviewed to report important differences in chiefly authority across the border. Togolese chiefs often noted that they thought Ghanaian chiefs were better respected and had more authority (e.g., ‘there is a big difference. The chiefs in Ghana have more authority than us’¹⁸) while Ghanaian chiefs perceived Togolese chiefs to be the spokesmen of the government and not a more organic representation of the people. One Ghanaian chief explained this at length,

‘For instance, in Togo, the chiefs derive their authority from government and not the local people ... If you are very influential in Togo and you don't come from the chieftaincy line, within a short time you may be declared as a chief ... But in Ghana, right from colonial days, you ought to be selected by the kingmakers, enstooled by kingmakers according to your traditional practice. Outdoored by your practice and recognised by your people. The government only gazettes you. But in Togo, till today, if you can manoeuvre yourself to be gazetted as a chief, then you have your easy way But there is one thing about them, once they recognize you as chief, there is no wavering. He is representing the governor there. You don't have the right to disobey him’ (Interview, Volta Region, 12 June 2019).

It appears that although both Togolese and Ghanaian chiefs are seen as authoritative amongst their villagers, Togolese chiefs seem to derive this authority from the government, to whom they are more subservient. Ghanaian chiefs seem instead to derive their authority from sources outside of the state. On the one hand, this finding is not surprising. Because the British (in comparison to the French) were more likely to devolve power to the chiefs, and because the postcolonial states in these countries largely reproduced these different legacies, we see that chiefs today in the former British colony are considerably more active and effective than their counterparts next door, and that the chiefs in former French colony tend to derive their communal power from the government. However, on the other hand, the results are surprising to the extent that none of the other proposed explanations from the literature

seem to carry much weight in explaining variation along the Ghana-Togo border. It appears, perhaps, that more distant chiefs do less in their communities, but otherwise distance from the state, relationship with the government, and succession procedures of the chieftaincy bear little weight in explaining the observed variation.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Drawing from an original public opinion survey conducted in fifty villages along the Ghana-Togo border paired with interviews with the chiefs of these villages, this paper has sought to interrogate common assumptions about traditional authority in political science. Specifically, we asked both chiefs and their subjects what their jobs and duties were within the village, the extent to which they exerted authority in doing these jobs (both downwards over their subjects as well as upwards over local state officials) and assessed the sources of variation in this authority. Based on this data, we make three key claims.

First, not all chiefs have the same jobs, but the one job that most people see as his most important—from both the chief's perspective as well as his subjects' perspective—is the resolution of local disputes. Based on this finding, we contend that the literature—which has been largely focused on the developmental role of chiefs—also spend more time considering his role promoting the rule of law. The fact that most citizens view the primary function of their chiefs as complimenting or substituting the courts and police holds important implications for bottom-up demands for state-building that deserve our attention.

Second, there is considerable variation in the amount of authority that different chiefs wield within their communities. Because cross-nationally chiefs are some of the most trusted

leaders in Africa, much of the literature has taken their authority and legitimacy for granted. Although our data also support the claim that chiefs are generally popular, this is far from universally the case. We further break down the concept of ‘authority’ to highlight its dichotomous dimensions: chiefs’ authority can both be *downward* over subjects and *upward* over local state officials. Critically, these dimensions may not move together.

Finally, we offer tentative evidence that more of the variation in the nature of the chieftaincy we document can be explained by a chief’s structural location than his individual attributes. Most notably, we build on others to show that international borders have placed otherwise similar ethnic groups on what are at times dramatically different trajectories in the modern period (Miles 1994; MacLean 2010). We suspect – and many of the chiefs we interviewed confirmed – that these differences are rooted in distinct patterns of state-building that began in the colonial period. As we show, the authority of Ghanaian chiefs is not seen as primarily derived from the state – with Ghanaian citizens far more likely than Togolese to report that their chief is a partner of or is in charge of local government officials – and they are broadly seen as responsible for more tasks, and more effective at doing these tasks. Despite these differences, Togolese chiefs are not relegated to meaninglessness. They remain important in their communities and are just as likely to be named by villagers as the most authoritative person in the community. But the nature of their authority is qualitatively different than their counterparts in Ghana.

Though we think these differences are relevant to much of the rest of the continent, we recognize that they may be different in cases where precolonial institutions were more hierarchical or where postcolonial politics radically undid the effects of colonial rule. First, as noted earlier, we would expect that the nature of precolonial institutions may play an

important role in the nature of traditional authority today, though much work remains to be done on this question (see [Nathan 2019 for an exception](#)). Second, French and British colonial rule were far from homogenous across the continent, and where the British were more interventionist—for example in settler colonies like Kenya—or where the French were less interventionist – such as Northern Cameroon - variation between chieftaincies may be less attributable to colonial legacies. Finally, while the postcolonial Ghanaian and Togolese states largely maintained colonial orientations towards traditional authorities, this was certainly not the case everywhere. We would expect to find that colonial legacies on the chieftaincy would be muted in contexts where postcolonial policy radically differed, for example in Guinea or Tanzania.

Nonetheless, building on these three findings, we challenge the literature to further consider the variation uncovered in this study. We do not believe, however, that this means scholars need to resign themselves to this complexity, as Rathbone (2000, 4) suggests when he writes that the ‘chieftaincy can never be more than a neat way of expressing considerable variety.’ We concretely suggest that instead of assuming uniformity of duties or authority of chiefs, these factors should be built *into* our theoretical models and research designs alike. In particular, we should be hesitant about mapping claims derived from research with one ethnic group or one country onto the entirety of the continent. The findings from this study suggest that we need more work understanding what drives differences among chiefs both within and across countries. Finally, we urge scholars to unpack the idea of authority when evaluating chiefly power, by asking: power over whom to do what?

NOTES

¹ Because some chiefs were unavailable or ill, some interviews were conducted with the chief's appointed representatives. When possible, we also spoke with elders who had knowledge of the village history.

² A recent exception is [Reardon \(2022\)](#).

³ There are two exceptions in our survey sample of 50 villages. First, one village is majority Konkomba, an acephalous group, but has a Dagbani chief, a legacy of the colonial appointment of the centralized Dagbon over the Konkomba in Ghana. A second village is majority Dagbani.

⁴ In order to protect the confidentiality of our interviews, we have anonymized the names of all villages reported in this paper.

⁵ Balance statistics can be found in Appendix A.

⁶ All of the Ghanaian surveys were completed in July 2019 along with 140 of the Togo surveys. Unfortunately, the survey was halted in Togo before its completion because of an administrative issue with Togo's Ministry of Territorial Administration. It was then further delayed by the outbreak of Covid-19. Once research was possible, data collection was completed in February 2021. Because we are investigating the historical roles of traditional authorities, we do not believe that our findings would be significantly altered by a 19-month gap in the data-collection process.

⁷ English, French, Ewe, Bimoba, Konkomba, Dagbani, Bassar, Lamba, Tchamba, and Kabye.

⁸ Usually, but not always, accompanied by one of the authors.

⁹ We selected these two officials as more-or-less equivalent local agents of the state because both operate at similar levels of local government, both hold similar levels of power (especially over development spending), and neither is elected. Both officials are appointed by the President, although in Ghana, once appointed, they must also be approved by a two-thirds majority of the District Assembly. Both officials are meant to be the chief representative of the central government within their district (prefecture) and are charged with overseeing the executive and administrative functions of the central state within their district or prefecture.

¹⁰ Logan (2013) presents similar findings from the Afrobarometer (359-62), though due to the nature of the data, she does not present any within-country variation, focusing instead on national-level averages. Further, the

question she analyzes frames traditional authorities against local and central government, thus obscuring the substantial role that traditional authorities may play in the co-production of these services.

¹¹ The next most common form of disputes involved family quarrels (what most chiefs characterized as ‘lovers spats’) at 40.5%, then crime (12%), water disputes (5%). One chief reported that he also dealt with witchcraft accusations.

¹² Respondents who reported that the job was definitively not one of the chief’s responsibilities were not asked the follow-up question about effectiveness.

¹³ See Appendix D in the Supplementary Materials for a discussion of two common measures of authority in the literature: reported trust in the chief and his influence on vote choice.

¹⁴ Interview with village chief, Alomé Netsi (12.6.2019).

¹⁵ Interviews with village chiefs, Efeyi (19.6.2019) and Evadji (20.6.2019).

¹⁶ We reproduce these models with two alternative measures in Appendix E, replacing whether a respondent falls in the north or not with the logged distance to the national capital and a measure of the chief’s reported relationship with the DCE or Prefet, a more local political authority than the MP. Results are consistent.

¹⁷ Socioeconomic status is factor variable of four parts: the respondent’s household’s fuel type, weekly meat consumption, the quality of their home’s physical materials (roof, walls and flooring) and an asset index (radio, television, car or truck, moto, mobile phone, laptop, flush toilet, refrigerator, bike, animal cart, passport and bank account).

¹⁸ Interview, Kara Region, 13 June 2019.

¹⁹ Further support for this is found in the results from Wald chi-square tests, which indicate that while locational variables (alone and in combination) significantly improve model performance, a chief’s relationship with the MP and the local selection process of appointing chiefs do not.

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Judge, landlord, broker, watchman:
Assessing variation in chiefly duties and authority in the
Ghana-Togo Borderlands

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Appendix A: Balance Statistics

Table A1: Balance Statistics

Village Pair	Population Estimate			Dist (km) to border			Chief Ethnicity	
	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Togo</i>	<i>Diff</i>	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Togo</i>	<i>Diff</i>	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Togo</i>
1	839	865	-26	0.83	1.94	-1.11	Bimoba	Bimoba
2	782	948	-166	4.09	6.45	-2.36	Bimoba	Bimoba
3	918	739	179	1.62	0.76	0.86	Bimoba	Bimoba
4	427	2331	-1904	5.72	8.27	-2.55	Konkomba	Bimoba
5	2600	510	2090	2.49	4.35	-1.86	Bimoba	Bimoba
6	1294	1004	290	0.58	1.84	-1.26	Bimoba	Bimoba
7	431	186	680	0.23	2.37	-2.14	Ewe	Ewe
8	1578	1489	89	0.6	1.17	-0.57	Ewe	Ewe
9	469	422	47	0.74	0.21	0.53	Ewe	Ewe
10	513	159	354	5.37	5.16	0.21	Ewe	Ewe
11	689	2226	-1537	3.32	3.95	-0.63	Ewe	Ewe
12	565	1374	-809	16.6	5	11.6	Ewe	Ewe
13	450	1277	-827	4.1	6.42	-2.32	Ewe	Ewe
14	136	189	-53	0.32	1.79	-1.47	Ewe	Ewe
15	720	2776	-2056	8.46	10.24	-1.78	Ewe	Ewe
16	496	1351	-855	7.24	6.37	0.87	Ewe	Ewe
17	774	624	150	1.6	1.81	-0.21	Ewe	Ewe
18	382	1432	-1050	1.19	1.21	-0.02	Ewe	Ewe
19	505	668	-163	6.9	6.19	0.71	Ewe	Ewe
20	150	179	-29	1.76	2.66	-0.9	Bassar	Bassar
21	2035	1962	73	2.72	1.78	0.94	Konkomba	Bassar
22	429	982	-856	2.97	2.81	0.16	Dagbani	Bassar
23	3861	1600	2261	15.4	3.86	11.54	Dagbani	Bassar
24	793	487	306	2.26	2.13	0.13	Konkomba	Bassar
25	475	516	571	2.36	4.06	-1.7	Konkomba	Konkomba

* In two cases, our villages have large differences in distance to the border. In the first, pair 12, the Ghanaian village was further away than maps had suggested. In the second, pair 23, the survey team went to an incorrect village on the Ghanaian side that had the same name. Because the surveyed village was still in proximity to the border, we include it here, but results are robust to omitting it.

Appendix B: Village-level results on chiefly duties, effectiveness, and authority

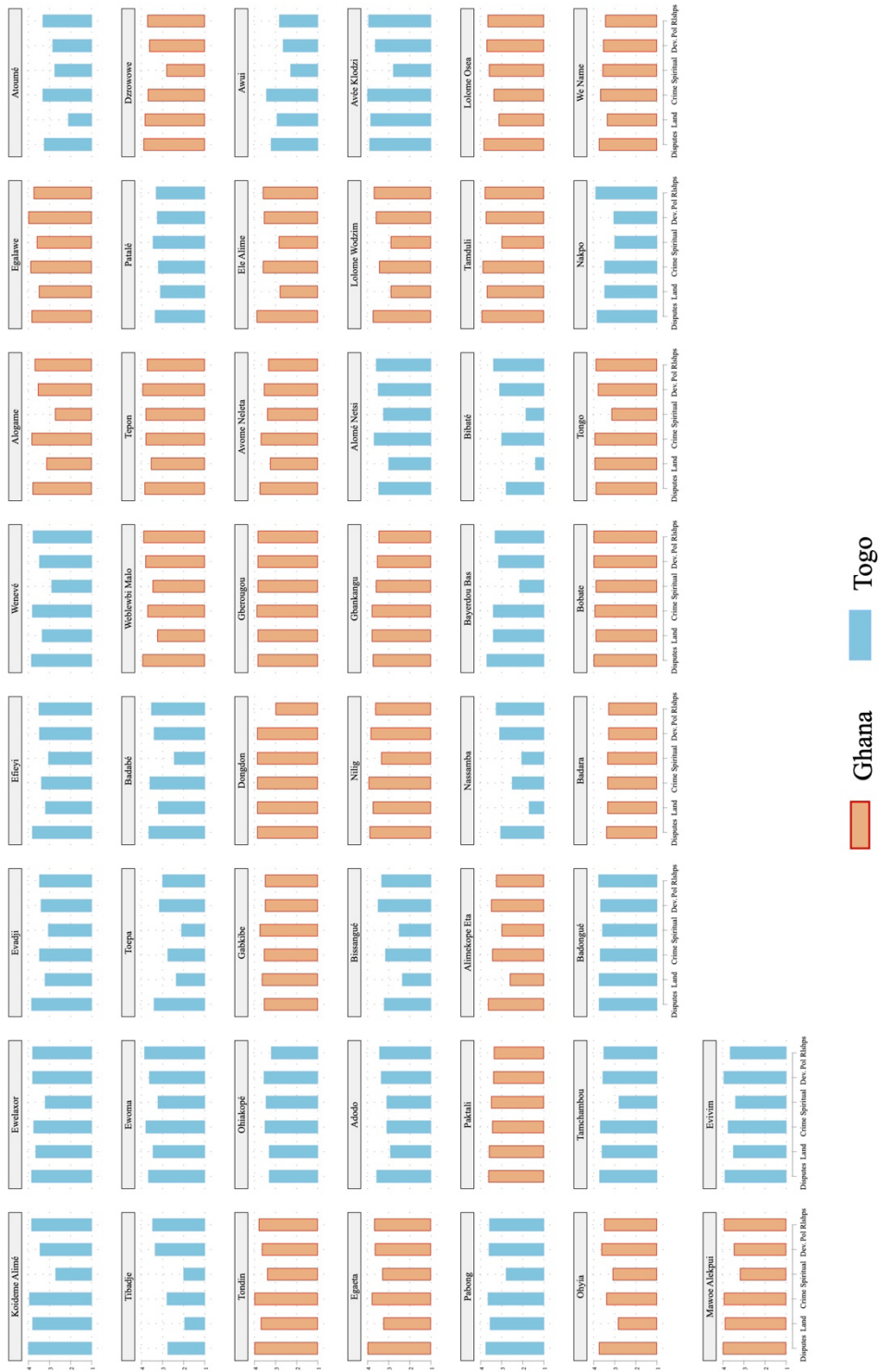


FIGURE A1: Is managing this issue an important part of your chiefs job? Village averages with 95% confidence intervals. Issue areas on x-axis. Village names are pseudonyms.

Appendix C: Descriptive statistics for explanatory variables.

TABLE A2:
Descriptive Statistics

	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean Ghana	Mean Togo
Togo	0.51	0	1000	0	1
North	0.48	0.49	1000	0.46	0.49
In Distance District (km)	3	0.62	1000	2.75	3.23
Strength of MP Relationship	1.15	0.73	919	1.15	1.15
Openness of Chieftaincy Selection	4.65	1.84	935	5.07	4.23

Appendix D: Question Specific Results (Disaggregated Replications of Figure 5)

Figure 5 presented average scores for chiefly duties and effectiveness. We replicate these models by each sub-question in Figures A3 (duties) and A4 (effectiveness) below. Two caveats to the findings from the averaged measure stand out. First, there is no statistically significant difference between Togolese and Ghanaian chiefs in their responsibility for land management/allocation or building political relations, though Ghanaian chiefs are perceived to be more effective at the latter. Second, Togolese chiefs are seen as less effective at two of the most important chiefly duties: resolving disputes and addressing crime.

The results in Figures A3 and A4 further support the general finding that an increased distance from the local state decreases the jobs a chief does (disputes, land management, crime, and building political relationships, the latter at the ten percent level). Effectiveness varies less on these dimensions, though chiefs who are farther from the local state are perceived as less effective on development. Importantly, Northern respondents were less likely to say that managing disputes or crime was an important part of their chiefs' jobs, but there is no difference in effectiveness.

The disaggregated models offer two points of nuance to our conclusion that attributes of the chieftaincy itself do not track onto a chief's expected duties or his effectiveness on the job. Chiefs selected through less open processes (e.g., shifting towards hereditary succession with a narrower body of selectors) increases the view that the chief is responsible for spiritual matters and that he is effective at building political relationships at the 10% level.

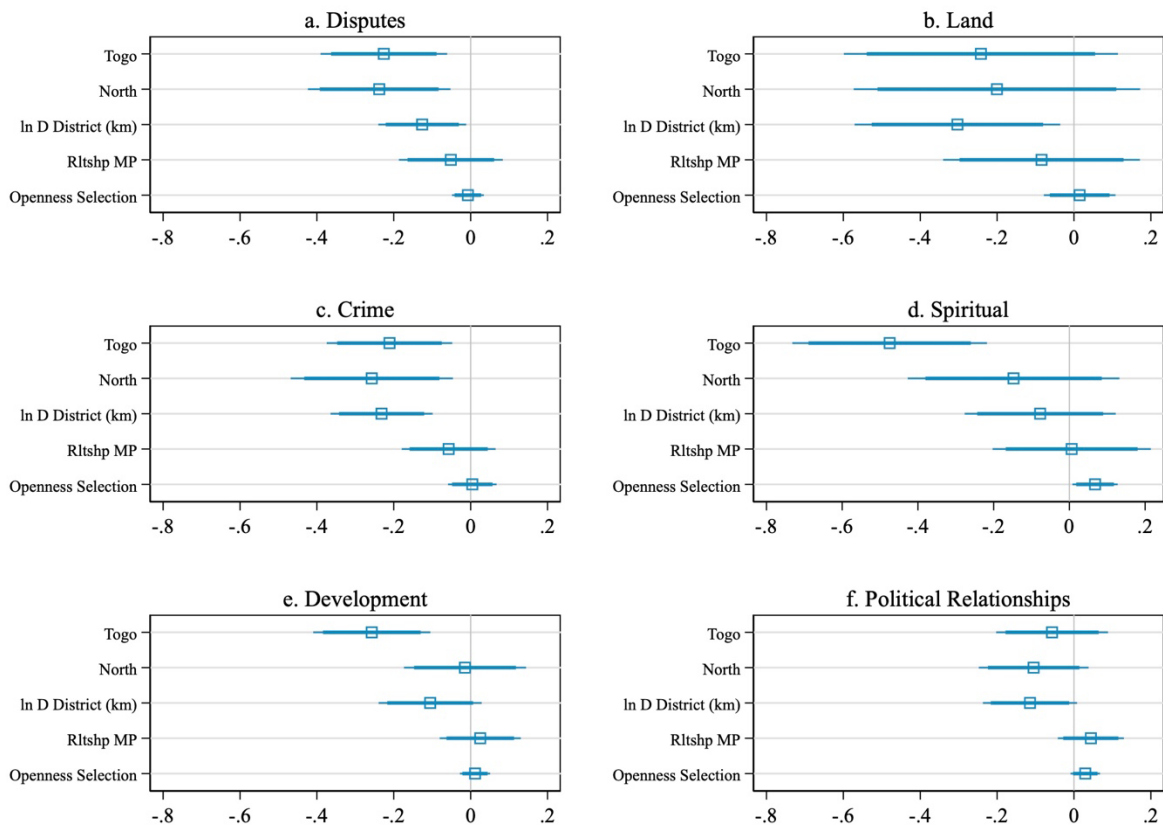


FIGURE A3: Disaggregated Results of Chiefly Duties (Figure 5 Extension) Dependent variable is how important a task the respondent views the following duties for their chief: managing disputes, allocating land, crime prevention, spiritual matters, development and building political relationships outside of the village. All responses on a four-point scale. Coefficients are from OLS models with standard errors clustered at the village. 90 and 95% confidence intervals reported.

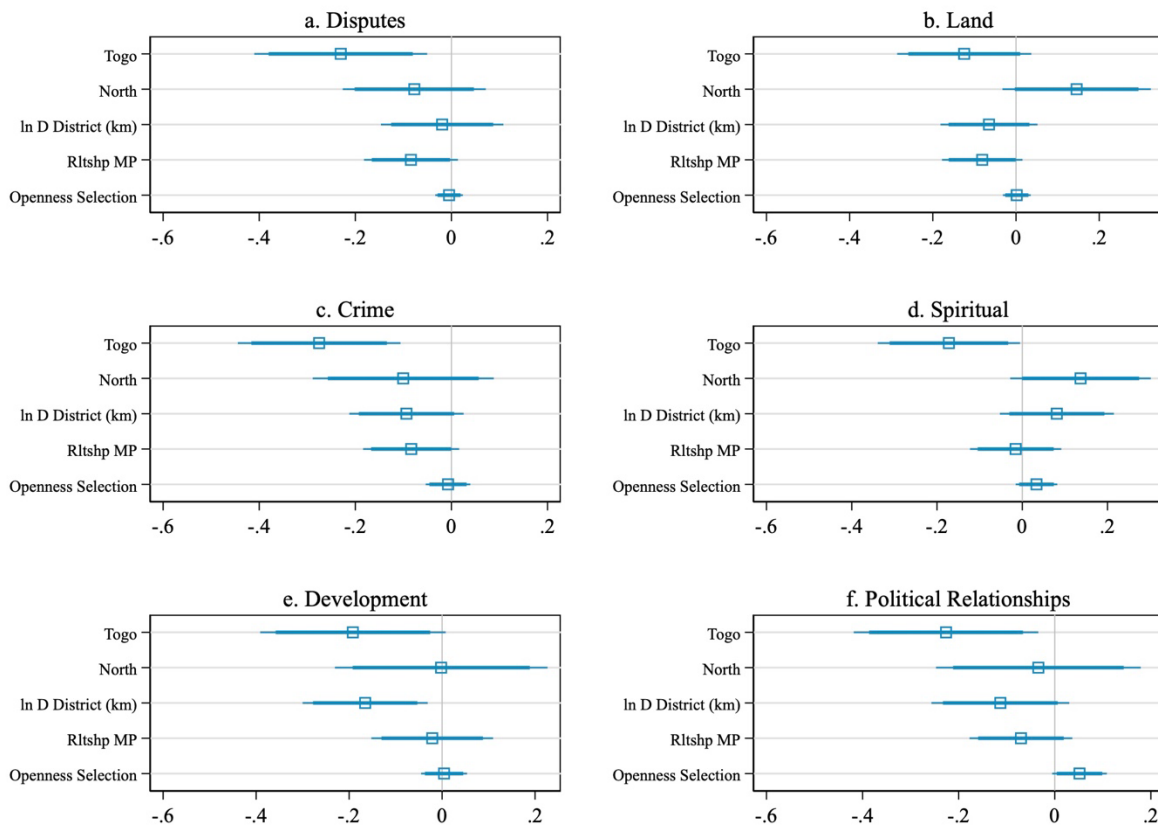


FIGURE A4: Disaggregated Results of Chiefly Effectiveness (Figure 5 Extension) Dependent variable is how effective the respondent perceives their chief to be at the following duties: managing disputes, allocating land, crime prevention, spiritual matters, development and building political relationships outside of the village. All responses on a four-point scale. Coefficients are from OLS models with standard errors clustered at the village. 90 and 95% confidence intervals reported.

Appendix E: Alternative Measures of Independent Variables (Figures 5 & 6)

Figure A5 replicates the findings in Figure 5 using two alternative measures. First, we show that there are consistent results if we use the logged distance to the national capital – located on the coast in both countries – in lieu of a dummy variable for North. This is arguably a better measure if what we are interested in is distance from the central state as opposed to a more blunt measure that assumes something distinct about the North in general. Secondly, we examine reported relationships with a more local political official: the District Chief Executive (DCE) in Ghana and the Préfet in Togo. Results are broadly consistent with all three sets of outcomes. Neither alternative variable significantly correlates with average duties, average effectiveness or any of our four measures of chiefly authority, though in Figure A6, Togo is no longer a significant predictor of the likelihood a respondent thinks their chief will listen at any level.

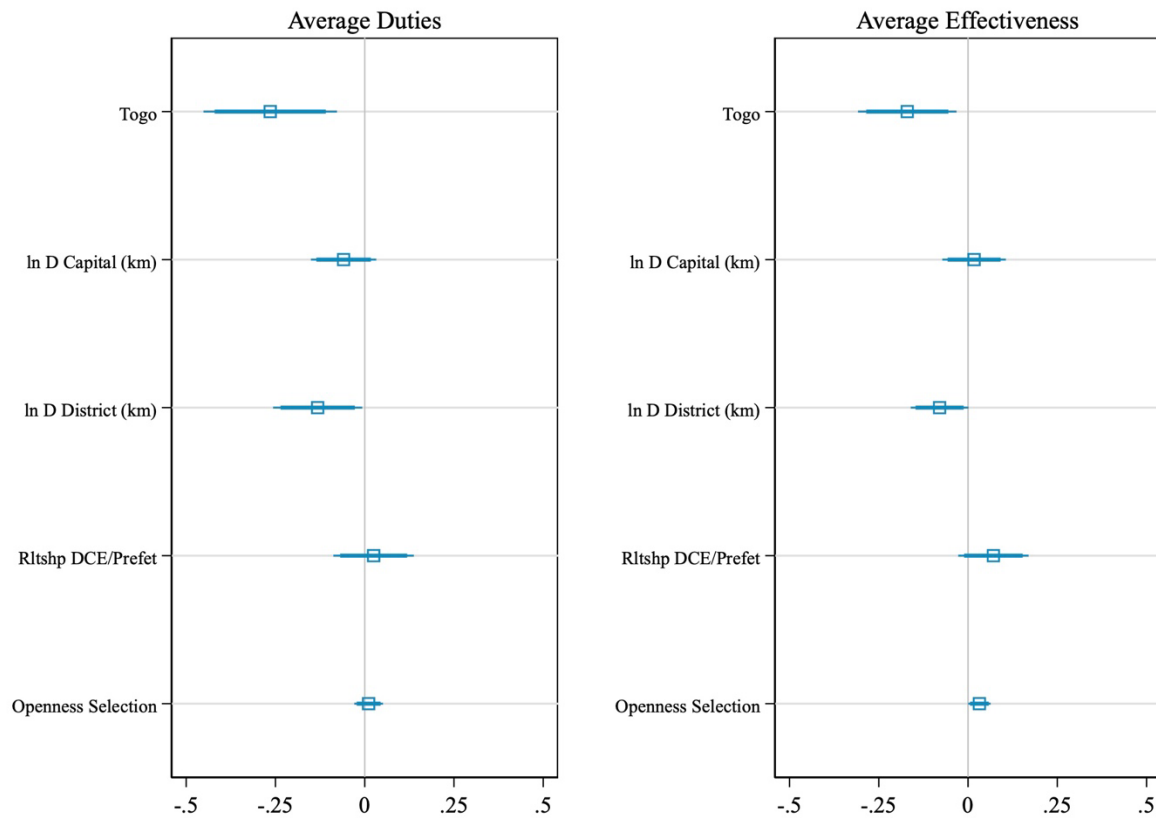


FIGURE A5: Explanations for variation in the average importance of duties ascribed to a chief (left panel) and his average effectiveness at those tasks (right panel) with Alternative IVs. Dependent variable is average score for how important the following are for the respondent’s chief’s duties/how effective the chief is at it: managing disputes, allocating land, crime prevention, spiritual matters, development and building political relationships outside of the village. All responses on a four-point scale. Coefficients are from OLS models with standard errors clustered at the village. 90 and 95% confidence intervals reported.

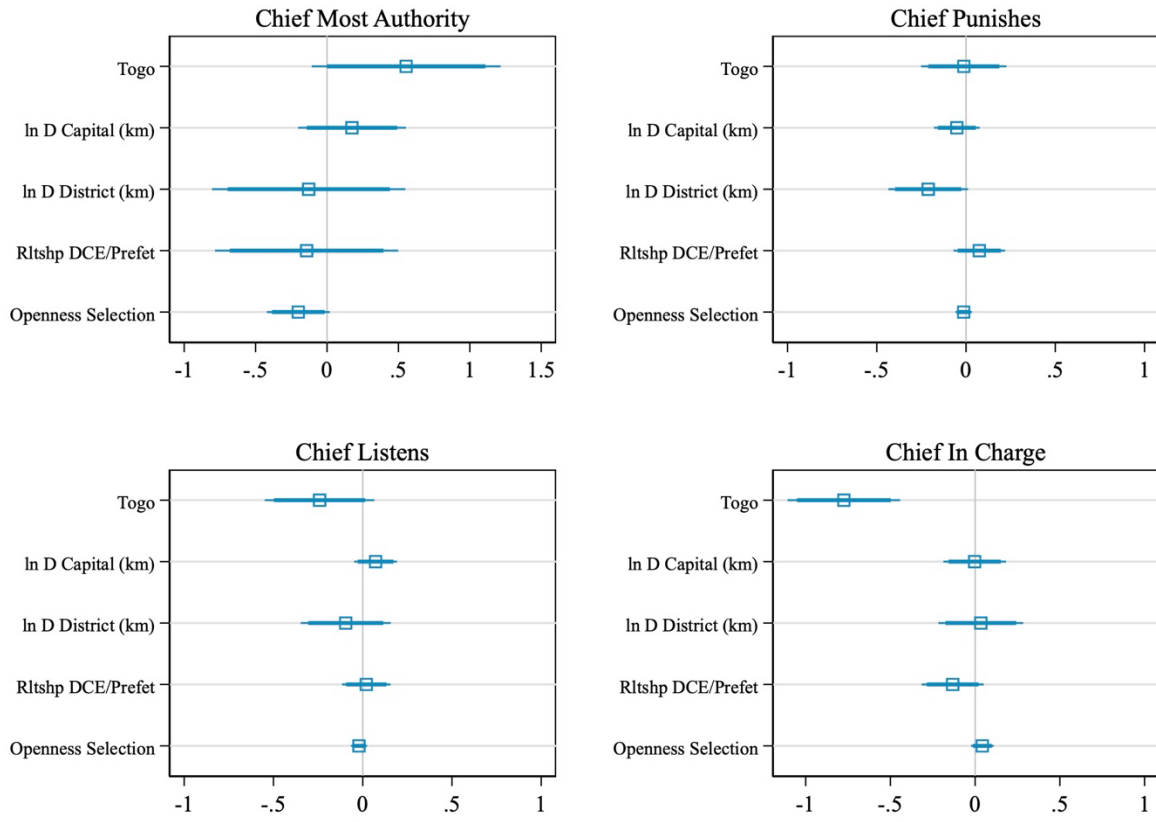


FIGURE A6: Perceptions of a Chief's Authority in the Village with Alternative IV measures. Results from logit (Chief most authority) and OLS (all others) regressions, grouped by dependent variable, with 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the village. 90 and 95% confidence intervals reported.

Appendix F: Alternative measures of chiefly authority: vote choice and trust

Two common metrics for assessing chiefly authority are not reported in the main text: the extent to which a respondent reports trusting their chief (e.g. Zimbalist 2021; Chlouba 2020) and whether or not their chief influences their vote choice (e.g. Baldwin 2013). We asked both questions in our survey and report the results descriptively below but choose not to report them in the main text given their particular potential to induce desirability bias. Although all of our survey questions likely induce some desirability bias, we feel it is particularly acute with these questions. Figure A7 shows the distribution of responses for both questions across countries. The vast majority of villages report trusting their chiefs.

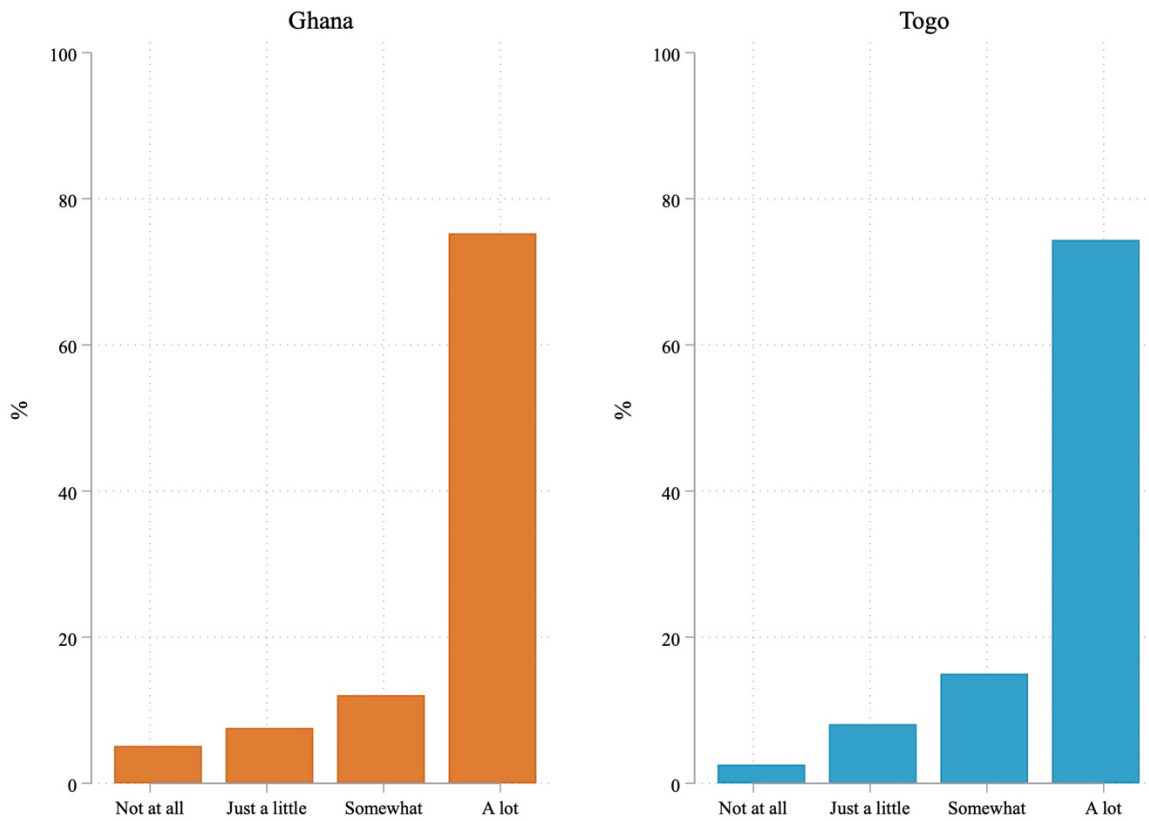


FIGURE A7: Distribution of Responses by Country to ‘How much do you trust your chief?’

Figure A8 shows the distribution for respondents’ evaluations about the influence of their chief on their vote choice. The left-side of the distributions look approximate to the extent that majority of respondents in both countries report that their chief has no influence on their vote choice (50.5% in Ghana versus 52.8% in Togo). The right hand of both distributions does diverge, however. Nearly double the number of Ghanaian respondents (22.8%) report that their chief is very influential in their vote choice compared to Togolese (11.5%).

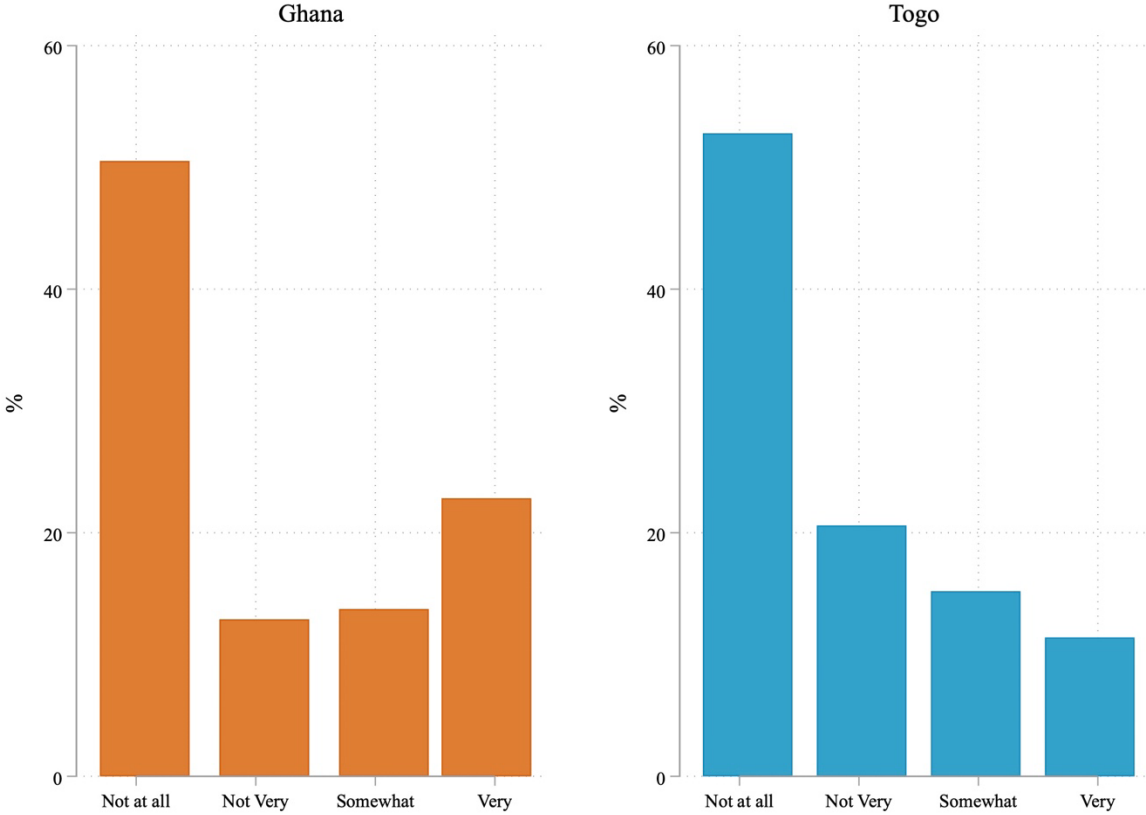


FIGURE A8: Distribution of responses by country to ‘When thinking about which party to vote for during elections, do you take into account the beliefs or opinions of your village chief?’

We rerun our authority models (Figure 6) using these two alternative dependent variables in Figure A9. Similar to our main results in Figure 6, we don’t find strong evidence that a chief’s downward authority (Chief important to vote) varies along any of our expectations. Trust in chief, which can be thought about as a more generalized measure does see significant variation on two dimensions: chiefs in our northern clusters see higher trust from survey respondents while, conversely, those who report stronger relationships with their MPs/Deputés see a decline in trust (significant at the ten percent level).

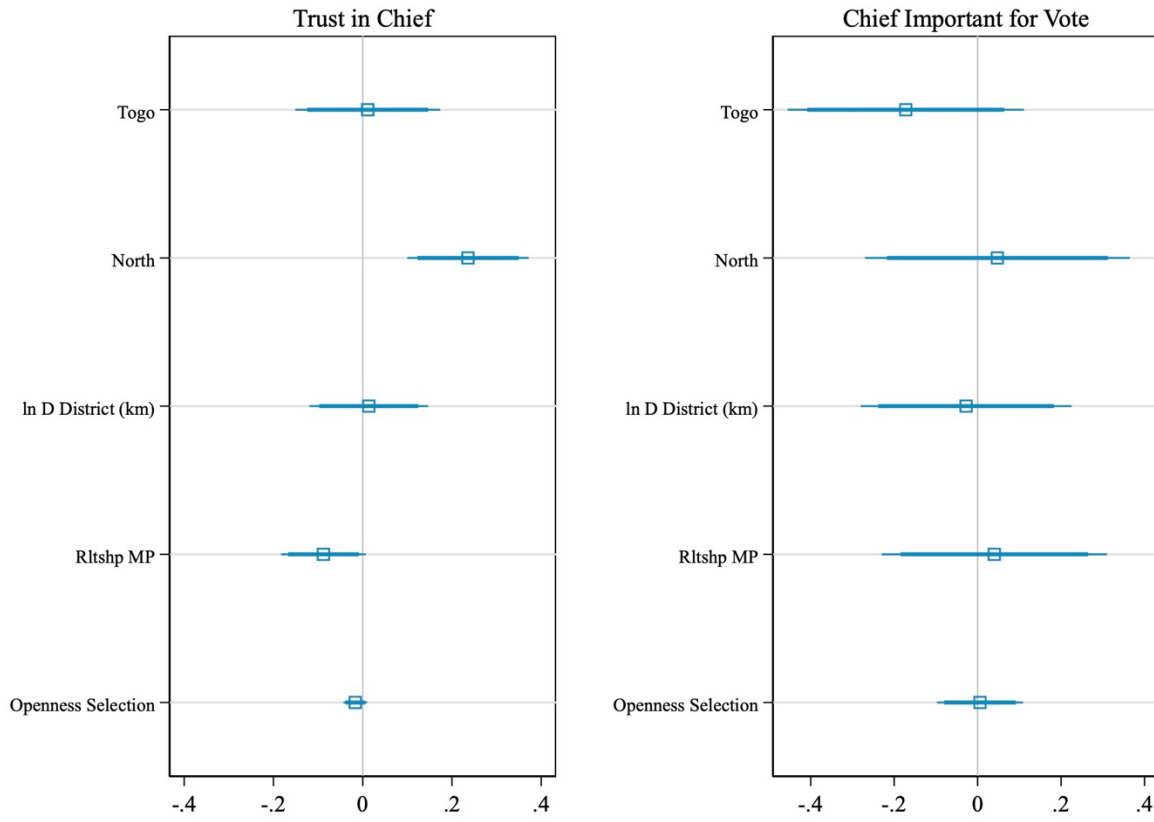


FIGURE A9: Alternative measures of perceptions of a chief’s authority in the village. Results from logit (Chief most authority) and OLS (all others) regressions, grouped by dependent variable, with 90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. Standard errors clustered at the village. 90 and 95% confidence intervals reported.

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