TRADITIONAL LEADERS AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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Summary and Keywords
Traditional leaders have a significant role in the social, political, and economic lives of citizens in countries throughout Africa. They are defined as local elites who derive legitimacy from custom, tradition, and spirituality. While their claims to authority are local, traditional leaders, or "chiefs," are also integrated into the modern state in a variety of ways. The position of traditional leaders between state and local communities allows them to function as development intermediaries. They do so by influencing the distribution of national public goods and the representation of citizen demands to the state. Further, traditional leaders can impact development by coordinating local collective action, adjudicating conflicts, and overseeing land rights. In the role of development intermediaries, traditional leaders shape who benefits from different types of development outcomes within the local and national community. Identifying the positive and negative developmental impacts of traditional leaders requires attention to the different implications of their roles as lobbyists, local governments, political patrons, and land authorities.

Keywords: *traditional authority, chiefs, hierarchy, decentralization, development, collective action, African politics*

Introduction
Traditional leaders play a significant role in the social, political, and economic lives of citizens in countries throughout Africa. They are defined as local elites who derive legitimacy from custom, tradition, and spirituality. While their claims to authority are local, traditional leaders are integrated into the modern state in a variety of ways. Some scholars believe that traditional leaders, or "chiefs," impede development by preventing citizens from engaging directly with the state, by siphoning off resources intended for communities, and by propagating extractive regimes with insecure property rights (Mamdani 1996). Yet others have demonstrated that traditional leaders can bring government investments into villages (Baldwin 2016) and represent the interests of communities to the state (Dionne, 2018; Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Fanthorpe 2006). This article contributes to this debate by outlining the distinct ways that traditional leaders can impact development.

Policy makers in Africa have long debated the legal and administrative positions of traditional leaders. Should traditional leaders receive government salaries and resources? Do they have too much influence in systems of decentralized governance? What should be their role in the management of natural resources? The outcomes of these debates have significant impacts on the governance of African countries and the lives of their citizens. There is therefore great value in

recognizing when traditional leaders have positive impacts on development, which types of development they contribute to, and how they are able to do so.

This article first defines traditional leaders, with attention to their relationship with both citizens and state. This is followed by a framework for understanding four roles that traditional leaders can play, each with different developmental implications: as lobbyists, political patrons, local governments, and land authorities. Whether traditional leaders fill these roles and how they distribute benefits varies greatly both within and across countries. To assess one source of heterogeneity among traditional leaders, the final section of this article examines the institutional underpinnings of traditional leadership. In particular, it reviews the mechanisms behind the effects of institutional hierarchy for traditional leaders.

Defining Traditional Leaders
Tradition as a claim to authority distinguishes traditional leaders from ethnic elites or local politicians. Myths of common origin and shared ethnic ties within their communities often help reinforce the authority of traditional leaders, as do rituals or local beliefs in their spiritual powers. However, the term "traditional" is not indicative of static or unchanging roles, but represents a "mode of legitimization of political institutions" (Holzinger, Kern, and Kromrey 2016, 470). Their reliance on tradition to justify their authority "evokes not just the past, but also difference from the state" (Willis 2013, 220). Thus, tradition allows these local elites to claim legitimacy that is independent from and superior to the state's, despite being integrated into the contemporary state.

The terms traditional leader and chief are often used interchangeably within political science literature.[1] They are umbrella terms which represent a wide range of titles held by traditional leaders in different countries and communities. The titles Obas, Emirs, Sultans, and Ovies refer to traditional leaders in Nigeria. Among the Mossi in Burkina Faso, chiefs are Nabas with titular posts representing their domains, such as Mogho Naba, Larlé Naba, and Ouidi Naba. In Senegal, the Lebou community evokes spiritual authority in titling their traditional leaders as Serignes. In general, citizens in francophone African countries refer to this type of leader as a "customary authority" (*autorité coutumière*) while "traditional authority" is common parlance in former British colonies. These terms are widely understood within African countries. However, given that the arrival of the colonial state significantly modified and, in some cases, created traditional leadership, many scholars prefer to use the term "neo-traditional" (Chanock 1998; Boone 2014; Miller 1968; Nabudere 2004). This approach emphasizes the rupture from any precolonial forms of authority and the integration of chiefs in the modern state.

Traditional leaders are linked to their communities, sometimes known as groups of "subjects" or "followers," by way of traditional institutions. These institutions are sets of rules and norms that are shared among members, which tie the community together. Traditional institutions are continually reinterpreted or replicated over time. They may be informal institutions—with no recognition by the state—or have formal responsibilities within the state's laws. Traditional

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[1] While this article follows the convention of using "chief" and "traditional leader" interchangeably, it is worth noting that not all chiefs are traditional leaders. Kenya provides an example of this distinction. There, "chief" refers to government-appointed civil servants who lack any underlying authority derived from custom. Instead, village elders provide traditional leadership that is distinct from these administrative chiefs (see, e.g., Ensminger, 1996).

leaders themselves have a key role in implementing these institutional rules within their communities and thus can change them. Yet, these institutions exist independent of individual leadership; when a chief dies, the institution remains.

Among other rules of behavior, traditional institutions designate when and why followers should be obedient to their leaders, and what they can expect in return. This is a key source of chiefs' influence over their populations. At the same time, traditional institutions also provide the norms that dictate who has the right to be the next chief and how succession occurs. Therefore, these institutions also establish the legitimacy of the traditional leader's authority. One source of variation in the structure of these institutions is examined in the section "Hierarchy and Traditional Leadership."

Traditional leaders gain power from both local institutions and from the state. Colonial and post-independence states throughout Africa have engaged with traditional leaders to collect taxes, organize labor, maintain social stability, and, later, to broker votes. To varying degrees, traditional leaders served as local governance for colonial regimes. After independence, many traditional leaders lost their state salaries and formal powers in a wave of anti-traditional nationalism. Nevertheless, in the 60 years since most African states gained independence, traditional leaders have maintained their utility to the state, in part due to their proximity to local communities. They survived as influential actors due to their "syncretism" (Miller 1968) or "hybridity" with the state (Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1999).

The 1990s ushered in a trend of increased statutory power for traditional leaders in a number of countries, with roles for chiefs formalized in new laws and policies (Englebert 2002; Buur and Kyed 2007). For example, Ghana's 1992 constitution provided traditional leaders the power to appoint 30% of the seats in District Councils. In 2005, the government of South Africa introduced a law that recognized powers of traditional leaders and their councils over communal land (Beall and Ngonyama 2009, 6). Mozambique's traditional leaders had their authority over a variety of rural governance duties legally recognized in 2000. Their newly formalized responsibilities ranged from taxation, land management, and administering justice to upholding "local customs, uses, and cultural values" (Buur and Kyed 2005, 14). Nuesiri (2014) reviews this expansion of formal recognition of the roles of traditional leaders in the 1990s and 2000s.

Contemporary chiefs in Africa are tied to the state through a variety of formal and informal relationships. Traditional leaders advise the government as members of Houses of Chiefs in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Namibia, Zambia, Liberia, South Africa, Ghana, and Botswana. Such advisory bodies echo the role of the House of Lords in the United Kingdom, but often have less influence. State politicians and officials frequently consult traditional leaders and treat them as the gatekeepers to local populations; the homes of traditional leaders are often the first stop for government agents visiting a community. In some countries, traditional leaders gain a salary or other benefits from the state. These relationships between traditional leaders and the state vary greatly across countries and over time within the same country.

Governments often rely on traditional leaders to help them distribute public goods, such as fertilizer and NGO donations. They may find it necessary to use a chief as the intermediary for both social and practical reasons (Swidler and Watkins 2017, 10). Similarly, decentralization

policies can empower traditional leaders with control over community resources (Ribot 1999; Fanthorpe 2006). Thus, there are a variety of ways that traditional leaders gain material benefits and political influence from a closer relationship from the state. Traditional leaders rely on this mix of status from both the state and local community to retain their influence. As intermediaries between the two, they often respond to pressure from above (the state) and below (the community).

The amount of power and legitimacy traditional leaders derive from the state and community varies greatly among countries and individual traditional institutions. While some local populations strongly support their traditional leaders and believe in their chief's claims of legitimate authority, others are skeptical and suspicious of their chiefs. Similarly, governments vary within countries and over time in their level of engagement with traditional leaders, at times treating them as collaborators or challengers (Boone 2003). The degree of state interference in these institutions also differs and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Engagement with the state, donors, and political parties can alter traditional institutions and community perceptions of chiefs (Baldwin and Raffler 2019; Fokwang 2009). Traditional leaders should be understood as a heterogeneous set of actors whose positions are shaped by internal institutions, embeddedness in local communities, and historical relationships with the state.

Traditional Leaders and Development
Traditional leaders are development intermediaries. Positioned between community and state, they can impact the representation of citizen demands, the distribution of national public goods, who has access to land, and the coordination of local collective action. Given the diversity of roles and systems of traditional leadership in African countries, two central questions help guide the study of the developmental impacts of chiefs. First, it is important to consider the counterfactual: what would the political system look like without traditional leaders in this role? Second, what types of development outcomes are being examined and who benefits from them? These questions shed light on how traditional leaders mediate development.

Chiefs as Lobbyists
Traditional leaders can help communities access public goods supplied or distributed by the state. They can represent the community's interests to the state and can help the community to coordinate its demands and expectations. In this way, traditional leaders function as civil society advocates or lobbyists on behalf of their communities.

Traditional leaders are often closer to their local populations than state agents are. They are embedded in local communities and hear community complaints. For many citizens, a traditional leader is the first authority they contact when they have governance issues. Among sub-Saharan African citizens surveyed by the Afrobarometer, 32% had reached out to a traditional leader in the last year to express an opinion or problem. This phenomenon is not confined to rural areas; 20% of urban dwellers also contacted a traditional leader in the previous year. By contrast, only 13% had contacted a government official, and 24% had contacted a local councilor (Afrobarometer 2016). In Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, citizens are at least three times more likely to contact a traditional leader than a government official (Afrobarometer 2016). Such regular contact with citizens can provide chiefs

with greater insight into the concerns of local populations. Further, many traditional leaders consider it their role to represent local interests to the state. Traditional leaders are well-positioned to aggregate these interests and relay this information to the state's agents or politicians.

This impacts development because traditional leaders can transmit these interests to the state politicians who determine where, for example, bridges and health clinics are built. There are a variety of arenas in which deal making between politicians and chiefs occurs. In some countries, both types of elites—traditional and state—circulate in the same social and economic circles. Bayart (1989) calls this the "reciprocal assimilation of elites." Traditional leaders coordinate with Members of Parliament to "co-produce" public goods for their communities (Baldwin 2016, 2018). Baldwin finds that in Zambia, the presence of a traditional leader increases the likelihood that the community will see new boreholes drilled and new schools constructed. Traditional leaders can also coordinate with the local governments that distribute public goods in decentralized systems. In Senegal, Wilfahrt (2018) demonstrates that communities with stronger traditional institutions have more new schools and health clinics, particularly in the era of decentralized local governance.

States accommodate the demands of traditional leaders because of their political and social power. Some states rely on traditional leaders to facilitate rural governance (Boone 2003). Collaborating with traditional leaders generates legitimacy for the state (Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996; Englebert 2000). Further, as described in the section "Chiefs as Political Patrons," chiefs also have leverage over state politicians through their role as vote brokers. The state responds to their advocacy, allows them to influence the distribution of national public goods, and provides them with status-enhancing development goods because they can deliver votes.

What does the role of chiefs as lobbyists mean for development? A traditional leader advocating on behalf of a local community can secure major improvements in that community's access to public goods. These public goods have high stakes for citizens. For example, a new government school where none previously existed can transform a community; the same can be said of health clinics, improved water sources, electrification, and paved roads. As a result, traditional leaders can be understood to promote local development when they represent community demands that would not otherwise be transmitted to the state. The majority of citizens across 19 African countries reported that they would like to see traditional leaders have a greater role in governance (Logan 2013, 364). The perception that traditional leaders can represent the needs of the community to the state is one likely reason that citizens express support for their leaders.

Not all development programs are equally desirable for traditional leaders, however. The traditional leaders' incentives to advocate to bring development programs to their communities depend on the impact those programs have on their power. It is true that, all things being equal, traditional leaders are motivated to please their populations; content followers are more obedient and more likely to provide labor or material tribute to the chief. Yet development initiatives have different implications for chiefs' power. Traditional leaders should be less likely to facilitate development programs that could undermine their influence by distributing their decision-making power within the community or formalizing rules that were previously based on their discretion. This includes, for example, programs that establish more participatory methods of

natural resource management or title customary land. Instead, traditional leaders are particularly apt to advocate for development programs that align with their interests. The interests of the chief and community generally converge for infrastructure projects, such as building a school or a road. These projects provide visible evidence of the chief's power to extract development goods from the state and their ability to provide for their subjects, without weakening that power.

The role of chiefs as intermediaries who facilitate how public goods are distributed within the nation also has implications for the citizenry as a whole. Mamdani's (1996) bifurcated state model suggests that traditional leaders function as a buffer which reduces the representation of citizen demands on the state. This allows the state to under-provide public goods but not be held accountable because citizens can place the blame instead on their traditional leaders for not lobbying hard enough for them. To evaluate this argument, one must consider the counterfactual: if one believes that the alternative to traditional leaders as lobbyists is a bureaucratic and entirely needs-based distribution of public goods throughout the country, then the overall effect of traditional leaders is anti-developmental. Where communities benefit from non-programmatic distributions of public goods, the citizenry as a whole suffers (see, e.g., Stokes et al. 2013, 245–60). Yet where the distribution of national-level public goods would likely follow another political logic such as ethnic or partisan clientelism, the role of traditional leaders as lobbyists is less problematic. Thus, the national impacts of chiefs as lobbyists depends on the alternative options available to the community for access to state resources, both in the short and long term. This varies depending on each country context.

Chiefs as Political Patrons
Traditional leaders also impact development through their influence on electoral politics. This role is not only a point of leverage for bringing public goods to their community but also impacts human development through citizens' representation. Scholars and practitioners have shifted from conceptualizing development as economic growth alone to a more comprehensive model of human development. Political participation and democratic freedoms are constitutive of such human development (Sen 2001). The impact of traditional leaders on democracy is therefore central to the relationship between traditional leaders and development.

The skeptical view of chiefs and democracy is that the two are incompatible because leaders selected by non-democratic processes cannot be considered representative of their populations. Traditional authority is generally hereditary, with the right to be a chief based on lineage. Some traditional institutions have large candidate pools for the next chief, composed of individuals from multiple royal lineages. In Sierra Leone, for example, the number of ruling families eligible to be chief ranges from one to 12 (Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson 2014). In other traditional institutions, the chieftainship is automatically reserved for the oldest child, niece, or nephew of the previous chief.

The size and nature of the group selecting the new traditional leader can vary, from a council of elders within the community, to a group of royal family members, to one influential individual. For example, when the sitting paramount chief dies in the Lozi traditional institution of Zambia, a council composed of royal family members meets to select the new chief. At times the state has a role in selecting chiefs or adjudicating succession conflicts, as Nyamnjoh (2014) describes in Cameroon and Botswana. Even if the rules of succession are known and respected within the

community, all residents of a community do not have an equal say in the selection process. Who can be a traditional leader and who can choose a traditional leader is therefore circumscribed and non-democratic. Due, in part, to these authoritarian aspects of traditional leadership, some scholars believe that traditional leadership is incompatible with democracy (Mamdani 1996; Ntsebeza 2005).

This understanding of traditional leaders as antithetical to democratic representation is complicated by Baldwin (2016). She argues that traditional leadership can improve democracy by making the state more accountable to communities. She explains that, much like the stationary bandits of Olson's (1993) classic model of authoritarianism, traditional authorities have longer time horizons than elected politicians and are embedded in their communities. This arrangement generates incentives to support local development because the traditional leader will have opportunities to benefit in the long run. By facilitating the distribution of public goods demanded by local voters, these unelected leaders can improve democratic accountability between citizen and state (Baldwin 2016). Consistent with this argument, public opinion data show that support for democracy and support for traditional leadership are compatible. Logan (2009) argues that African voters do not see a trade-off between democracy and chieftaincy and, further, that traditional leadership within electoral systems can deepen democracy.

The impact of traditional leaders on political representation is well-established in their roles as vote brokers and patrons in elections (Beck 2008; Fanthorpe 2006; Koter 2016; Bado 2015; Fokwang 2009). Traditional leaders are effective brokers due, first, to their proximity to the local population. Regular interactions with citizens provide ample opportunities for traditional leaders to organize voting blocks. Second, they can use their moral authority among local populations to encourage them to vote in a certain way. When citizens overwhelmingly trust their traditional leaders, leaders' recommendations carry weight.[2] Third, chiefs' authority over the distribution of resources within the community, such as land or fertilizer supports, can generate immediate benefits to compliance. Research demonstrates that traditional leaders use different strategies for encouraging group voting based on the local institutional context. The structure of the traditional institutions determines whether brokers will rely on persuasion through ideas, rewards for compliance, or sanctioning noncompliant voters (Gottlieb 2017). Further, citizens may comply because they anticipate that politicians with a closer relationship to their chiefs will be better at providing public goods (Baldwin 2013).

Another reason that traditional leaders are such effective brokers is that they stand to gain both material and political benefits from brokering votes. Traditional leaders are a unique set of brokers because they also have defined political interests in relation to the state—the continuing influence of traditional authority. Brokerage can be a tool for traditional leaders to access power from the state. In South Africa, traditional leaders align with political parties that can credibly protect their legal recognition and promote pro-traditional leadership policies (de Kadt and Larreguy 2018). More generally, traditional leaders can demonstrate their continuing relevance in the modern state by influencing elections. This reminds state politicians of the leader's clout in relation to local populations.

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[2] For example, 67% of Afrobarometer respondents report that they trust their traditional leader somewhat or a lot, compared to 51% for local elected governments (Afrobarometer, 2016).

As a result, politicians visiting traditional leaders is ubiquitous in most contemporary African political campaigns. Politicians "like to praise the chiefs as the 'guardians of our values and identity'" (Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996, 43). Public displays of respect for traditional leaders appeal to voters who see their traditional institution as legitimate and want to see this reflected in their country's politics. For example, in Burkina Faso, the protesters that drove Blaise Compaoré out of power in 2014 and the leaders of the subsequent transitional government sought the blessing of the Mogho Naba (Bado 2015). The traditional leader's courtyard was treated as a legitimizing forum for decisions on who should hold power. Displays of respect for traditional leaders can also signal that the politician would allocate greater resources to the chief's followers in the future. Thus, when Zambia's Michael Sata wanted to gain more support from outside of his ethnic Bisa/Bemba base in 2011, he made campaign-trail promises of more rights for the Lozi traditional institution (Resnick 2013, 219–20). The social, political, and economic influence of traditional leaders make them influential political patrons.

Brokerage can be an effective means of integrating voters into electoral politics, yet by definition it emphasizes personal relationships over policy issues. This can undermine the formulation of non-personalistic electoral institutions and hurt the representation of citizen demands. Brokerage continues, even in the absence of vote monitoring or immediate rewards, when citizens consider it their best option to bring resources to their community (van de Walle 2007). Voters may follow the endorsements of their traditional leaders in hopes that the elected politician will bring resources to their communities (Koter 2016).

As discussed in the section "Chiefs as Lobbyists," chiefs can function as lobbyists in aggregating citizen demands to the state, including negotiating for public goods or programmatic agendas. The ability to broker votes can increase leaders' ability to lobby the state on citizens' behalf. While not universally the case, the role of traditional leaders as brokers in elections suggests that there are strategic benefits to citizens in a given political system to comply with the chief's recommendation. It therefore seems likely that brokerage will continue until citizens have greater confidence in other logics of voter mobilization, such as programmatic platforms of politicians and parties.

Chiefs as Local Government
Traditional leaders are often the primary authority in the daily lives of rural citizens. In addition to a role in providing public goods for their communities by lobbying the state, chiefs can also organize local public goods. Their influence over local populations allows them to enforce systems of collective contributions to community projects, such as wells, roads, bridges, and new community schools. This role is particularly important in weak states where the state does not or cannot provide many of the public goods that facilitate development. For example, Akinola (2008) describes how traditional institutions, among others, have generated collective action around the construction of water projects, bridges, and roads in oil communities of the Niger Delta that feel neglected by the state.

Chiefs can successfully deliver and maintain local public goods by organizing the necessary community labor. Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson's (2014) study of traditional leadership in Sierra Leone demonstrates that citizens participate in community labor at higher rates when they have more powerful chiefs. The authors find evidence that stronger chiefs are better able to

coordinate collective action, but that this does not translate to improved overall development outcomes in the community. This finding is likely the result of chiefs abusing their power and generating insecure property rights, a role considered in detail in the section "Chiefs as Land Authorities."

Traditional leaders also contribute to public goods provision by obliging financial contributions to local public goods in the form of informal taxes and tithes. In Liberia, Baldwin and Mvukiyehe (2015) tested this logic in public goods games and found that community members with traditionally appointed chiefs contributed more than communities with elected chiefs. Further, in some traditional institutions, providing an annual contribution in the form of money or crops is common. In Zambia, citizens often provide tribute to their chiefs during annual traditional celebrations. Systems of tithing are theoretically redistributive such that community members can ask for help from their chiefs in times of need. However, it is difficult to know how often this occurs.

Chiefs are able to organize collective action to provide public goods through a mix of coercive capacity and social capital. Consider first their coercive power. Traditional leaders have political and social influence in the community, allowing them to punish individuals who do not contribute. As intermediaries with the state, they can also determine who has access to materials and services provided by the state. For example, Goist and Kern (2018) find that in the Buganda Kingdom, the desire to signal good behavior to traditional leaders is a stronger motivator for cooperation than signals among peers. This is evidence of the important role of sanctions and rewards from traditional leaders in generating community contributions to public goods. Further, many traditional leaders combine temporal and spiritual power, which increases their coercive power (see, e.g., Geschiere 1997; Fisiy 1995). Chiefs are often more effective than other types of authorities at organizing local public goods because they are embedded in local culture (Swidler 2013).

The social capital and community cohesion that chiefs generate also encourage compliance with local public goods projects. Many citizens respect their traditional leaders as representatives of their culture and communities. Fanthorpe (2006) suggests that residents participate in community labor, albeit begrudgingly, because they believe that the chief is more likely to protect their interests than elected politicians or bureaucrats. Citizens value local public goods and are willing to contribute to projects that benefit their communities. In such a context, the chief functions as the first-mover in a collective action game; he or she has the advantage of having greater moral and coercive authority than the average community member. From this position of power, traditional leaders have the ability to organize collective action that generates better access to local public goods.

Local governance also includes the provision of security and conflict resolution. Readers are encouraged to consult the large literature on customary law and traditional dispute resolution for in-depth analysis of this role (see, e.g., Aiyedun and Ordor 2016; Bennett et al. 2012; de Juan 2017; Blattman, Hartman, and Blair 2014). Traditional leaders as security providers can increase the rule of law and contract enforcement in the absence of a strong state. Their processes can be more consensus-based and attentive to the need to restore social peace (Boege 2006). At the same time, in adjudicating conflicts, traditional leaders can reinforce political and social

divisions. For example, in Baldwin, Muyengwa, and Mvukiyehe's (2017) study of rural Zimbabwe, over a third of citizens reported that the village court's decisions were biased, with significantly higher perceptions of bias among those with different political views than their village heads (Baldwin Muyengwa, and Mvukiyehe 2017, 14). Further examples of perceived biases are found in Liberia, where women suing men are more likely to opt for statutory courts over traditional conflict resolution (Sandefur and Siddiqi 2013).

The positive impacts of the traditional leader generating public goods that may not otherwise exist must be moderated by attention to equity issues. Chiefs are embedded in traditional institutions with structured social relations. These institutions may contain divisions based on caste, lineage, and gender, among others. In determining what types of goods are produced, who benefits, and who contributes to them, traditional leaders can reinforce these divisions or represent some citizens' needs over others. As a result, the developmental impact of chiefs as local government varies not only across chiefdom types but also across different members of the community. These equity issues are also critical to the developmental implications of traditional land governance.

Chiefs as Land Authorities
Land is one of the most important domains of traditional leaders in Africa. Less than 10% of the land in sub-Saharan Africa has statutory forms of property rights such as land titles (Alden Wily 2015). Instead, much of the land used by smallholder farmers is under the jurisdiction of a traditional leader. Among 18 countries surveyed by Afrobarometer, 34% of respondents reported that in practice, it is a traditional leader who has authority over land where they live. Among only rural residents, this increases to 39%. In Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, more than half of citizens in rural areas access land through traditional leaders (Afrobarometer 2008). Control over land is a significant source of power for chiefs (see, e.g., Ntsebeza 2005). It provides chiefs with influence over their local populations who rely on them for secure land rights. It also provides chiefs with leverage against state politicians who must negotiate with them for access to the valuable natural resource.

Traditional leaders oversee the property rights for millions of citizens without titled land across Africa. The traditional leader's role in land governance falls into two main categories of customary land tenure: chief-controlled systems and lineage-controlled systems (Ensminger 1997; see also Bruce 1998). In chief-controlled systems, the traditional leader is considered to be the owner of the land, and he or she allocates usage rights to community members. These can be revoked or reallocated at the chief's will, including efforts to make land use practices more efficient. More common are lineage-based systems where the role of the traditional leader is to interpret and enforce the customary system of property rights. In this case, family lineages are the owners of each plot of land and the chief serves as a witness to adjudicate norms of lineage-based informal land ownership. In the lineage-based system, the chief is consulted when there are disputes over boundaries between neighbors or within lineages over the division of land. In both systems, the traditional leader may also oversee forms of overlapping and secondary rights, such as shared grazing lands or zones for gathering edible wild fruits and leaves.

The quality and characteristics of the traditional leader's land governance has important consequences for development. An important literature on the political economy of development

locates the source of long-term development outcomes in the security of property rights (North and Thomas 1973; Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001). Where property rights are secure, citizens can more confidently invest in their land and businesses. Traditional leaders can determine whose property rights are secure and, more broadly, decide who benefits from the use of land, the key source of revenue for citizens, states, and the private sector. Research demonstrates that there is wide variation in the security of customary property rights overseen by traditional leaders. Chiefs may provide stronger property rights than state land titles (Brasselle, Gaspart, and Platteau 2002; Bruce and Migot-Adholla 1994). On the other extreme, chiefs can be extractive, generating insecure land tenure regimes to gain material and political benefits (Onoma 2009).

Traditional leaders as land authorities determine who has strong or weak property rights within their communities. They can systematically privilege some groups and underprivilege others when they allocate land and adjudicate conflicts. For example, households with high status within the traditional institution have more secure property rights in Ghana (Goldstein and Udry 2008), Zambia, and Senegal (Honig 2017). These insiders can more confidently invest in their land than other community members because they anticipate that the traditional leader's land governance decisions prioritize their rights.

Chiefs' land governance shapes the political and social lives of community members in addition to their economic opportunities. Traditional leaders can reinforce conservative community norms by maintaining divisions based on caste, class, gender, ethnicity, migration status, and age (Atwood 1990; Jacob and Le Meur 2010; Tripp 2004). For example, Boone (2014) shows how ethnic outsiders in Western Burkina Faso and Ghana lost their customary land rights as land became scarcer. Chiefs and their followers used discourses of autochthony and belonging to justify expropriating ethnic outsiders' land and reducing their political rights in the community. The study of land governance reinforces the point that a traditional leader's effect on development in any given context hinges, in part, upon how equitable their local governance is and who is systematically excluded or undermined.

With regard to customary land, traditional leaders also have a role in determining where new state development projects and large commercial farms are established. The land rush of 2008–2012 focused on customary land in Africa (Collier and Venables 2012; Borras et al. 2011), which many politicians and investors treated as inexpensive and unused land because it lacked titles. Traditional leaders influence the outcomes of these negotiations over large areas of customary land, both as custodians of land and community leaders. They can prevent large land deals or facilitate them. In Zambia, for example, some chiefs have welcomed land deals opposed by their local populations, who fear displacement (Nolte 2014; Brown 2005). Other chiefs in Zambia have blocked large land deals that would transform land tenure in their domains. Such variation in the responses of traditional leaders to large-scale land deals is present even in countries without a formal role for chiefs in land governance, such as Senegal (Honig 2018). By exerting influence over the locations of such land deals, traditional leaders impact state or national developmental agendas of promoting commercial agriculture and commodifying land. At the same time, these decisions over large-scale land deals impact the tenure security of local smallholder farmers. In a number of ways, traditional leaders shape how land is used within the country and whose access is protected.

In some contexts, traditional leaders can improve development outcomes by protecting and enforcing land rights better than the state can. In other contexts, they can provide weaker property rights, particularly to certain groups of citizens. There is no simple answer to how this compares to the alternative, state property rights. Whether titling is pro- poor depends on the political context (Lipton 2009). Titling does not empower smallholder farmers in the absence of unbiased state enforcement; titling customary land changes community relations and land usage patterns, among other trade-offs (Boone 2017). Overall, the argument that land titles are the primary obstacle to development (de Soto 2000) has yet to find support in African states (Bellemare 2013). Therefore, one important question for future research is how to improve the inclusiveness and security of land rights overseen by traditional leaders.

Hierarchy and Traditional Leadership
Traditional leaders are not of one kind; there is considerable heterogeneity in how chiefs engage with citizens and state politicians within countries and over time. A growing body of scholarship has attempted to understand some of these differences through the study of institutional structures. Among other things, traditional institutions define who is a legitimate leader and what the responsibilities of both leader and community members are. These institutions impact the power traditional leaders have over local populations and their available resources for negotiating with the state. The differences among these institutions are critical to how they perform in these roles, particularly relative to other traditional institutions within the same country.

One key difference among institutions is hierarchy, defined by the number of levels of authority that exist above the village level. The terms "centralized" and "decentralized" or "state" and "stateless" are also used to represent this variation in institutional structures. Non-hierarchical institutions are sometimes termed "acephalous" or "segmentary" (Geschiere 1993). The early origins of the study of hierarchical structures to explain differences among traditional institutions is the work of colonial-era anthropologists, notably Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940). In the 1960s, George Murdock systematically categorized ethnic groups throughout the world by degree of hierarchy, among other political and economic variables. The resulting *Ethnographic Atlas* continues to be the data source for many cross-national studies of hierarchy in traditional institutions (Murdock 1967). It is important to note that even institutions without hierarchical structures of authority can be understood to have hierarchical ties between leader and follower. Further, the dichotomy of hierarchical and non-hierarchical institutions is not comprehensive of the many sources of variation that impact the way that traditional leaders function. Instead, it is one prominent framework, among others, for understanding patterns of state-building and contemporary development outcomes.

Scholars have proposed a variety of mechanisms tying levels of hierarchy to development. First, hierarchy increases the bargaining power of traditional leaders (Boone 2003; Baldwin 2014; Archibong 2018). A hierarchical structure allows leaders to influence more citizens than a decentralized organization could. Having a larger number of followers increases the leader's leverage against the state. This generates greater incentives for the state to co-opt hierarchical leaders using material and political benefits. As a result, traditional leaders can gain more autonomous control of their localities and more easily extract resources from the state for their

communities. Central to this mechanism is the distribution of power; a traditional leader in a hierarchical traditional institution has concentrated control over a larger number of people.

Second, chiefs in hierarchical institutions may have stronger ties of loyalty and obedience with their citizens (Koter 2016). Much like the bargaining power that results from increasing their number of followers, increasing the strength of these ties also increases the chief's leverage against the state. Traditional leaders with more obedient followers can more effectively and quickly mobilize them, for example to protest or vote in a certain way. This can improve development outcomes in their communities if the chief uses this leverage to advocate for public goods investments from the state. This obedience is also at the heart of collective action. Traditional leaders with stronger ties to their followers can better mobilize the collective action necessary for the local production of public goods.

Third, hierarchy can generate horizontal ties of accountability among traditional leaders themselves. In institutions with multiple levels of authority, superior chiefs can punish or reward lower-level chiefs. In hierarchical institutions in Zambia, for example, citizens can complain to a paramount chief about poor governance by their local chief. In response, paramount chiefs have dethroned, suspended, and punished sitting chiefs (Honig 2018). Hierarchy has the potential to improve the performance and accountability of elites within the institution by generating an additional check on the behavior of local-level traditional leaders.

Internal accountability mechanisms created by hierarchy can also impact the institution's relationship with the state. Gennaioli and Rainer (2007) argue that where there were hierarchies, the colonial state could more effectively implement modernization programs because they could hold lower-level traditional leaders accountable through the institution's own system of accountability. Coordinating with each traditional leader was too costly for the colonial state, but in a hierarchical institution, superior chiefs could force local chiefs to comply. This made it easier for the colonial state to establish schools and health clinics in areas with hierarchical institutions. These colonial investments then had long-term impacts on local development.

A fourth mechanism that scholars have used to link hierarchy to development outcomes is the potential of hierarchical traditional institutions to create a foundation for legitimate state institutions. The Tswana traditional institution of Botswana is often used as an example of this dynamic. The overlap between the boundaries of the state and the boundaries of the traditional institution generate legitimacy for the state and greater accountability between government and the governed. Scholars studying Botswana's political and economic successes have emphasized the importance of this overlap (Hjort 2010; Samatar 2005; Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2003; Englebert 2000).

Englebert (2000) theorizes that the legitimacy generated by a territorial overlap with a hierarchical traditional institution frees state politicians from the insecurity of many postcolonial African states. This allows them to concentrate on implementing developmental policies instead of patronage strategies. Where there is less congruence between the members of traditional institutions and the state, politicians must rely on patronage to consolidate power among the elites that could threaten the regime. This theory predicts that development outcomes will be worse where there are no hierarchical institutions or multiple, competing hierarchies. Englebert

(2000) argues that this difference in the congruence of traditional institutions with the state laid the foundation for developmental policies in Botswana and neo-patrimonial politics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. When powerful hierarchical institutions do not map onto the boundaries of the nation, they can delegitimize the state or serve as the foundation for social divisions.

Tests of these mechanisms in cross-national studies have demonstrated a consistent correlation between traditional hierarchy and development. Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2013) find an association between precolonial hierarchy in Africa and one measure of development: nighttime light density. This proxies economic activity and infrastructure access. Alsan (2015) replicates this result using a different model specification and different ethnicity data. Similarly, Gennaioli and Rainer (2007) find that precolonial hierarchy predicts a set of improved health and education outcomes as well as an increase in paved roads. These are signs of greater public goods investments.

To advance this literature and clarify the mechanisms at work, research will increasingly need to examine the impacts of different types of traditional institutions at the subnational level. The channels available for traditional leaders to influence development differ depending on the laws of each colonial and modern state. Further subnational research can help identify why different hierarchy mechanisms are salient in different country contexts and why hierarchy continues to impact development. For example, Bandyopadhyay and Green (2016) show that Ugandan citizens living in areas of hierarchical traditional institutions are wealthier than fellow citizens in areas with non-hierarchical institutions. Yet, in Nigeria, some of the poorest regions have hierarchical traditional institutions. Archibong (2018) argues that hierarchical institutions with leaders who rebelled against the state lost the ability to lobby for public goods, leading to long-term differences in infrastructure access. Such within-country comparisons illuminate how statutory and traditional institutions interact and why contemporary traditional leaders behave differently.

Conclusion
Scholars have long been puzzled by the continued support for chiefs among citizens, given their hereditary succession and myriad opportunities to be extractive. This article provides a framework for understanding the positive and negative impacts of traditional leaders on development. Citizens weigh these various impacts and prioritize some over others in formulating their perspectives on traditional leadership. For example, the negative effects of chiefs on democracy and representation may be less apparent in day-to-day life than the chief's ability to organize local public goods.

How citizens measure the developmental impacts of their chiefs also depends on their point of comparison. Is the alternative to chiefs an efficient bureaucratic state? Or do citizens imagine the alternative to their chief as a weak state, rife with other logics of clientelism? Their support for traditional leadership is likely a response to an immediate counterfactual, as opposed to an ideal alternative system of governance that could potentially develop over time. As a result, traditional leaders have retained their authority and seen a resurgence in that influence despite repeated attempts by state leaders to undermine or erase their authority over the past half-century. Given

this resilience, chiefs can be expected to continue to retain real power within African politics for the foreseeable future.

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