Traditional Leaders, Service Delivery and Electoral Accountability

Kate Baldwin[*] and Pia Raffler[†]

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1   Introduction

Traditional leaders and customary governance institutions remain important, especially at the local level, in many low-income countries. Indeed, many observers have noted a recent resurgence in the importance of traditional institutions (Englebert, 2002; Holzinger, Kern and Kromrey, 2015; Logan, 2009), contrary to the expectations and goals of modernists (Mamdani, 1996). The persistence and revival of these institutions is particularly obvious in Africa (Baldwin, 2016b; Logan, 2013), but has also been noted in Latin America (Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler, 2014; Van Cott, 2008) and Asia (Henley and Davidson, 2008; Murtazashvili, 2016).

As a result, aid agencies are constantly making choices about how best to interact with traditional leaders. In programming areas as diverse as justice, the environment, security sector reform, public health and community empowerment, donors need to decide how to treat traditional chiefs, whether it be by adopting conscious strategies of engagement, choosing deliberate policies of avoidance, or taking ad hoc decisions based on the logistical needs in specific settings.[1] In light of this, the goal of this chapter is to review recent evidence on the effects of traditional leaders on locally organized public goods provision, government performance and electoral accountability, with an eye to informing future choices by policymakers and program coordinators. This topic is relevant to aid agencies working in diverse geographic areas, although as an empirical matter, most academic research on this topic has been conducted in sub-Saharan Africa.

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[*]Department of Political Science, Yale University, katharine.baldwin@yale.edu.

[†]Department of Government, Harvard University, praffler@gov.harvard.edu

[1]For examples of each of these types of choices, see Sheely (2013b), Denney (2013), and Vajja and White (2006) respectively.

We start by defining traditional leaders, adopting a deliberately broad definition of these leaders as "rulers who have power by virtue of their association with the customary mode of governing a place-based community" (Baldwin, 2016*b*, p. 21).[2] This definition includes a wide range of leaders, from *caciques* in Latin America to *maliks* in the Middle East and Central Asia to tribal chiefs in sub-Saharan Africa. It encompasses leaders who rule communities as small as villages and as large as countries. However, the definition excludes leaders unless they play a role in the governance of a geographic community; thus, *marabouts* in Senegal and village *mullahs* in rural Afghanistan are included (Murtazashvili, 2016; Cruise O'Brien, 1971), but many religious leaders are not. Communities are often governed by traditional institutions that include multiple leaders, such as customary courts and councils. When referring collectively to the diverse group of leaders who fall under this definition, we use the terms traditional leaders and traditional chiefs interchangeably throughout this review.

A distinguishing feature of these leaders is their ability to associate themselves with custom. As a result, their status in their communities is legitimized by something *beyond* appointment by the state.[3] By emphasizing only that these leaders are associated with custom, the definition allows for the fact that custom is not static but often changing, contested and even sometimes "invented" (Ranger, 1983).

The power of traditional leaders in the contemporary world differs dramatically from place to place. Some countries have successfully displaced traditional forms of governance, replacing customary leaders with elected politicians or appointed bureaucrats; others have not. In addition, the power of chiefs often varies dramatically within countries. The status of chiefs in contemporary communities is a result of complex historical processes. It is partly a function of governments' bureaucratic capacity to project power into territories (Herbst, 2000). Empirical studies have found chiefs have greater status in rural and ethnically diverse countries (Holzinger et al., 2017) and in more remote, less densely populated regions of these countries (Baldwin, 2014). In addition, post-colonial governments have often made shrewd economic and political calculations when deciding whether to try to displace or bolster these leaders (Boone, 2003). Empirically, they have been more likely to support chiefs who are valuable economic or political partners as a result of their control of cash crops or voters (Baldwin, 2014).

Because the question of how best to engage with traditional leaders is only relevant in places where they still have significant status, we begin our chapter by providing some comparative data on the power and function of chiefs. Unfortunately, it is no simple matter to assess how much

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[2]See Holzinger, Kern and Kromrey (2015), pg. 3 for a similar definition.

[3]The definition is encompassing enough to include chiefs whose authority is propped up by the state insofar as there is still some appeal to tradition in legitimizing them. Only in instances in which authors adopt the extreme view that traditional chiefs' authority derives entirely and only from the state (for the closest example to this extreme, see Ntsebeza (2005)) does the definition become non-sensical.

power traditional leaders maintain in particular communities, especially because the de facto power of traditional leaders often does not correspond closely with their de jure powers under official laws. The best comparative data on traditional leaders has been collected via the Afrobarometer's surveys of citizens in sub-Saharan Africa, and we use it to examine cross-national variation in the power of chiefs on this continent in table 1. Column 1 of the table measures variation in traditional leaders' influence, broadly conceived; it reports the percentage of citizens (across urban and rural areas) who say that traditional leaders have some or a lot of influence over the governance of their local community. Traditional leaders have almost no power in countries like Madagascar and Tanzania, while remaining very powerful in countries like Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Table 1: Perceptions of traditional leaders in select African countries

Country	TLs have some or a great deal of influence in governing local community	Traditional leaders primarily responsible for					
		Local dispute resolution	Land allocation	Managing schools or health centers	Keeping community clean◇	Law & order	Tax collection
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Zimbabwe	79%	54%	46%	2%	32%	12%	4%
Malawi	75%	56%	63%	10%	27%	17%	4%
Botswana	73%	76%	25%	2%	9%	13%	3%
Ghana	69%	60%	70%	4%	30%	12%	5%
Lesotho	65%	76%	42%	4%	38%	29%	3%
Liberia	62%	29%	15%	3%	10%	3%	2%
Burkina Faso	59%	26%	30%	3%	7%	3%	3%
Mali	59%	46%	37%	5%	16%	9%	12%
Zambia	58%	40%	42%	2%	24%	9%	4%
Nigeria	56%	29%	21%	5%	11%	3%	4%
Senegal	53%	34%	16%	2%	4%	3%	9%
Kenya	51%	53%	20%	5%	10%	3%	3%
Namibia	49%	23%	24%	6%	15%	10%	6%
Uganda	47%	29%	32%	4%	10%	5%	5%
Benin	42%	13%	17%	1%	4%	1%	1%
South Africa	40%	14%	19%	8%	12%	7%	4%
Tanzania	24%	4%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Madagascar	22%	7%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%

Notes: Source is Round 4 of the Afrobarometer survey. Survey questions for column 1: "How much influence do traditional leaders currently have in governing your local community?" Note that this question was not asked in urban Zimbabwe. Columns 2-7: "Who do you think actually has primary responsibility for managing each of the following tasks. Is it the central government, the local government, traditional leaders, or members of your community?" Measures for (a) managing health centers and schools and (b) keeping the community clean and protecting rivers and forests were combined. ◇ The full description of the tasks referred to in Column 5 is "Keeping community clean or protecting rivers and forests".

Although there is a great deal of variation in the overall influence of traditional leaders, there is somewhat less divergence in their main responsibilities in communities where they remain pow-

erful. Drawing again on data from the Afrobarometer survey, columns 2 to 7 in table 1 report the percentage of citizens who say traditional leaders have primary responsibility for different tasks. The data show that traditional leaders in sub-Saharan Africa often play leading roles in resolving disputes and managing land, but citizens do not expect them to take primary responsibility for social services, environmental management, security or tax collection. Indeed, the importance of traditional institutions in managing disputes, especially over property rights and land, is widely noted beyond Africa, too (Murtazashvili, 2016). Yet, even in areas where the government, rather than traditional leaders, is expected to take the lead, traditional leaders often act as facilitators; for example, they may encourage members of the community to volunteer labor for infrastructure projects, or they may report security risks to the police.

The mode of appointing traditional leaders also varies between communities, depending on how local custom is conceived; as a result, the method of appointment is not explicitly incorporated into our definition of traditional leaders. However, as an empirical fact, it is unusual for communities to have historically selected leaders via periodic election.[4] In the contemporary period, traditional leaders typically have indefinite tenure and often rule for life (Baldwin, 2016b).

The fact that most traditional leaders are not regularly elected is important for two reasons. It means both citizens and higher level leaders have difficulty motivating these leaders to act on behalf of their interests through threat of removal from office; this important mechanism for generating accountable leadership is not typically available in the case of traditional leaders. But the fact that traditional leaders have indefinite tenure also means that these leaders have long time horizons. Insofar as they expect to rule their communities for life, they have an incentive to invest in building local institutions with long-term benefits in a way that elected leaders do not (Baldwin, 2016b). A critical challenge, then, is ensuring traditional leaders are motivated to build institutions that will provide public rather than private benefits.

Although historically it has proved difficult to motivate good leadership at the national level without the threat of electoral sanctions (Lake and Baum, 2001; Stasavage, 2005), traditional leaders may have non-electoral motivations for governing well. In particular, scholars have emphasized two reasons that traditional leaders may be motivated to govern well – the effectiveness of the process by which they are selected in choosing "good types" (Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson, 2014; Gottlieb, 2015), and the social and economic incentives they have to govern in the interest of the broader community (Baldwin, 2016b; Gottlieb, 2015; Tsai, 2007a).

First, some processes of selecting traditional leaders may be fairly effective in selecting good leaders. In particular, some scholars emphasize how competitive the processes for selecting chiefs are (Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson, 2014). There is great variation here; in some instances, multiple candidates compete to be elected chief-for-life, and in other instances, one individual is ap-

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[4]For data on the rarity of elections as procedure of selecting village-level leaders, see Giuliano and Nunn (2013).

pointed by virtue of their position in the family tree of the ruling family or the stated preferences of the previous traditional leader. Competition should increase the breadth of candidates considered and therefore the quality of leader selected.[5] However, the amount of competition in the selection of traditional chiefs may be a double-edged sword; in particular, it may foster divides in communities that make chiefs less representative of community interests and less effective community mobilizers (Baldwin, 2016*a*; Baldwin and Mvukiyehe, 2015).

Second, traditional leaders may have social and economic incentives to govern in the interest of their broader community. Specifically, some scholars argue that traditional leaders who are economically and socially embedded in their communities may govern well; economic links to the local economy or social pressure may provide incentives to provide public goods, even absent electoral incentives (Baldwin, 2016*b*; Tsai, 2007*a*). Indeed, the strength of customary leaders' ties to local communities often distinguish them from other political leaders. However, there is also great variation among traditional leaders in the extent of local embeddedness. At one extreme, some leaders earn all their income from local businesses or contributions from community members for services they provide; at the other extreme, some chiefs receive large monthly stipends from the government or royalties from multi-national companies. Similarly, some chiefs live full-time in their communities and have broad social ties, while others make their primary residence in distant cities or towns or are connected to only a subset of the population. We argue that the social and economic embeddedness of leaders is critical in determining whether chiefs have incentives to govern well; for example, Zambian chiefs who are more socially and economically embedded in their communities are less likely to prioritize private goods over public goods, and communities make fewer complaints about their rule (Baldwin, 2016*a*). Historically, the threat of social and economic sanctions were essential in encouraging good governance by traditional leaders (Ayittey, 1991).

In what settings do socially and economically embedded traditional leaders exist? Very little data exists that allows us to compare the economic and social position of traditional leaders, and so we can provide only tentative answers. The best data available to us are from Zambia; this data, collected through a survey of 110 traditional leaders, measures how often chiefs travel to the capital city for non-medical reasons (a proxy for lack of "social embeddedness") and whether they run local businesses in their chiefdoms (a proxy for "economic embeddeness"). In the Zambian context, chiefs are more likely to be socially embedded in more remote communities, and they are more likely to be economically embedded if they live in less economically developed communities

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[5]In addition, competition among ruling families could also potentially create incentives for individual leaders to act in the interest of their community while in office. Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson (2014) argue that traditional leaders have an interest not only in perpetuating their own rule but in perpetuating the rule of their direct descendants. In this case, citizens may be able to use the threat of removing the family from office to enforce accountable leadership even without the possibility of removing individual leaders from office.

and are from more centralized ethnic groups.[6] Indeed, research in China and Senegal also suggests traditional leaders are more likely to have incentives that align with their communities in more remote and economically underdeveloped communities (Gottlieb, 2015; Mattingly, 2015). However, more analysis and data collection on this topic is necessary so we can understand when traditional leaders have strong ties to their local communities and when they do not.

Indeed, one of the more general takeaways of this chapter will be the importance of local context in determining the best strategies with regards to engaging traditional leaders and traditional institutions. In reviewing the academic literature on the effects of traditional leaders on local public goods provision, government performance and electoral accountability, we will return to the importance of the competitiveness of the selection of leaders and their embeddedness in their communities numerous times to explain divergent outcomes. Our review shows that traditional leaders in weak states often play constructive roles in providing public goods and improving governance; in these settings, development programs that exclude traditional leaders ignore a critical resource and are unlikely to achieve their maximum potential. But we also note a quandary for aid agencies: Locally embedded traditional leaders make the best partners in terms of implementing effective development programming, but without careful program design, the act of partnering with these leaders may reduce their embeddedness in their communities, thus having potentially adverse effects in the longer run.

2 What We Know from Academic Studies

This section summarizes what we know about traditional leaders, service delivery and democracy from the academic literature. We first discuss the direct role of traditional leaders in the provision of local public goods, before turning to their effects on government performance, especially service provision by the state. We conclude this section by discussing the literature on the role of traditional chiefs in elections.

Our review focuses primarily on two types of research: studies that make critical theoretical contributions to these topics and studies based on quantitative empirical analysis from the contemporary period. Importantly, we exclude from our review much of the growing literature on the legacies of pre-colonial institutions; this is because, in most of this literature, it remains ambiguous whether the legacies of pre-colonial institutions operate through strong traditional institutions in the contemporary period.[7] We geographically limit the scope of our study to developing and emerging countries; in fact, the majority of the studies we review are from Africa due to the greater academic attention given to traditional institutions by scholarship on this region. Traditional lead-

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[6]See table 2 in the appendix.

[7]For a review of the literature on pre-colonial institutions, see Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2015).

ership is by its nature an interdisciplinary topic, and – though we engage with arguments made by scholars from a wide variety of disciplines – our review of empirical studies focuses mainly on research conducted by political scientists and economists. The advantage of this is that we can be comprehensive in reviewing empirical studies that address the topics of interest within these parameters.[8]

2.1   Chiefs and Locally Organized Public Goods and Services

We begin by examining the effectiveness of traditional leaders in organizing locally provided public goods and services. The focus here is on goods and services that are financed and organized by communities rather than by a higher-level government. The range of examples in the studies we review include boreholes, waste collection and public order. We first consider studies that compare whether traditional leaders and/or customary institutions are more effective than alternative leaders and institutions in organizing local public goods and services, and then we review the smaller set of studies examining how the characteristics of traditional leaders influence their effectiveness in organizing local public goods.

Public Goods Organization: Traditional Leaders versus Alternative Institutions

From a theoretical perspective, it is uncertain whether traditional leaders or officials subject to electoral accountability should be more effective in organizing contributions to local public goods. Elected leaders should have incentives to provide local public goods and services, which are valued by citizens, and may have the legitimacy to increase voter contributions towards their provision (Dal Bo, Foster and Putterman, 2010; Grossman and Baldassarri, 2012). But traditional leaders who are embedded in communities may also have incentives to provide local public goods and also typically have longer time horizons and thereby often have stronger local institutions for coordinating and sanctioning (Baldwin, 2016b). As a result, theoretically, traditional leaders could be more or less effective than alternative leaders in directly organizing local public goods.

Several recent studies assess the quality of local public good provision by traditional leaders, as compared to public goods provided by formal governments. For example, in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler (2014) find that municipalities ruled by traditional *usos y costumbres* are better than party-led municipalities at providing electricity. In 1995, indigenous communities had the opportunity to opt into the *usos* system, a traditional governance system characterized by high levels of participation, the non-partisan election of leaders according to customary law and a parallel justice system. Using a matching strategy, these municipalities

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[8]For readers interested in reading interdisciplinary reviews of the literature on traditional leaders, see Nuesiri (2014) and Holzinger, Kern and Kromrey (2015).

are compared to communities with similar characteristics and long-term settlement patterns that instead chose to be governed by political parties. Communities with the *usos* system are found to be more likely to have higher levels of political participation and higher provision of electricity. However, there was no or only an inconsistent impact on sewage, water and literacy rates.

Similarly, Baldwin (2016*b*) finds that traditional chiefs play a unique role in organizing local public goods that depend on community contributions in rural Zambia. This analysis takes advantage of the fact that the leadership of Zambian chiefdoms lapses for a period following the death of the chief, and that the death of chiefs in any given time period is typically exogenous to local political and socioeconomic factors. She finds that lapses in traditional leadership result in significant decreases in the provision of co-produced local public goods, in particular schools and boreholes, suggesting chiefs play a critical role in mobilizing communities to contribute to these goods. In contrast, lapses in political leadership following the death of elected Members of Parliament do not result in the same reduction in local public goods provision.[9]

Two related studies in Afghanistan focus on the effect of customary councils (*shuras*) on dispute resolution. Using data from two nationwide surveys, Murtazashvili (2016) finds that, across a variety of measures of dispute levels, communities with access to customary institutions fare better than communities with access to community-development committees (CDCs), World Bank sponsored councils that are supposed to be elected. Consistent with this finding, Jochem, Murtazashvili and Murtazashvili (2016) find that customary councils are *expected* by voters to perform better than elected CDC councils with regard to reducing social divisions and furthering reconciliation with the Taliban. The analysis is based on a nationally representative survey experiment with 8,000 Afghan households. Note that the survey experiment presented voters with hypothetical vignettes about different forms of local governance.

In a related field experiment in Sierra Leone, Turley et al. (2015) ask a more basic question: whether traditional leaders are better than *average* villagers at managing small-scale community level projects. They find that the traditional leaders perform better, since traditional leaders have greater management capacity and better mobilization skills than average citizens. While comparing traditional leaders to randomly selected citizens is a relatively low bar, the findings assuage fears of traditional chiefs being *worse* leaders than the citizens they represent.

On the other hand, two recent field experiments do not find any evidence for a difference between traditional leaders and their alternatives. Sheely (2013*a*) finds no difference in the effectiveness of official state bureaucrats and traditional elders in ensuring continued compliance with a clean-up campaign in Kenya. Similarly, Beath, Christia and Enikolopov (2013*a*) find no difference in either embezzlement or community mobilization in villages in Afghanistan where newly formed, elected CDCs were explicitly tasked with food aid distribution and villages without these

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[9]The latter result is not presented in detail in the book.

institutions, where traditional leaders were asked to perform the task. Instead, the villages where traditional councils distributed wheat were worse at targeting objectively vulnerable households compared to elected councils.

We conclude from these studies that traditional leaders are often – albeit not always – very effective in organizing local public goods that require high levels of community contributions and/or compliance, rendering them potentially effective brokers between their citizens and the state. Two aspects are noteworthy. First, when it comes to community mobilization in particular, traditional leaders are never found to be worse than the alternative leaders and institutions to which they are compared, and they are often significantly better. Second, the cases where studies found no difference between traditional and formal leaders, or found that traditional leaders performed worse with regard to targeting, are in the context of randomized control trials; in these settings, the tasks assigned to leaders by the intervention may have a certain degree of novelty, and traditional leaders may not be able to apply their organizational capacity to these new tasks. An important caveat is that the existing literature has focused on the effects of traditional governance in contexts where the state has fairly weak bureaucratic capacity and low accountability. These are settings where the involvement of traditional leaders is likely to result in greater improvements in public goods provision, compared to more developed states.

Collective Action and Traditional Leader's Characteristics

Are there studies that explicitly examine how variation in traditional institutions affect the ability of traditional leaders to coordinate their communities and provide local public goods? More research is recommended on this topic, but a handful of studies have empirically studied how the selection method of chiefs affects their mobilizational capacity. Here again we have uncertain theoretical priors. On the one hand, we may expect competitively selected leaders to enjoy greater legitimacy and thus to have greater capacity to mobilize voluntary contributions. On the other hand, leaders who face fewer constraints may wield greater social control.

Taking advantage of plausibly exogenous variation in the number of ruling families, and thus political competition, across chiefdoms in Sierra Leone, Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson (2014) find that although competitively selected chiefs appear more accountable, as discussed further below, they wield lower levels of social control, which in turn renders them worse at coordinating community contributions to local public goods such as road brushing. Social control is a double-edged sword: While it may be used to increase contributions to local public goods, it can also be misused. For example, Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson (2014) find that non-competitively selected chiefs are less likely to allow their citizens to resell their land. They interpret their findings as suggesting that non-competitively selected chiefs exercise social control through the capture of

civil society.

Similarly, Baldwin and Mvukiyehe (2015) find that competitively selected chiefs are worse at organizing compliance with public order and contributions to local public goods in Liberia. Taking advantage of a break in the way village leaders are selected after the civil war, they find that when traditional leaders are selected by elections, this has little to no effect on political participation in their communities but negative effects on public order. Outcome measures consist of self-reported participation in community and national governance, participation in protests, and contributions in public goods games. While participation in non-contentious politics does not increase when chiefs are elected, participation in protests becomes more likely and contributions to public goods decrease.

The take-away from these two studies is that competitively selected chiefs tend to be worse at coordinating their communities to comply with public order and to contribute to local public goods compared to chiefs who face fewer constraints. These chiefs appear to wield lower levels of social control; however, their incentives may be more aligned with those of their communities, as is discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

2.2   Chiefs and Government Performance

Next we review the literature on the effects of traditional leaders on government performance in the area of service provision. While the previous section focused on whether the direct involvement of traditional leaders in organizing local public goods and services was more effective than available alternatives, this section examines how the existence of traditional leaders and customary institutions impacts the government's performance. In theory, there are two models by which traditional leaders could positively or negatively impact the government's performance in delivering services: by acting in parallel to the state's activities (*parallel systems*) or by establishing relationships with state actors that influence their incentives and capacity (*integrated systems*).[10]

However, competition between traditional leaders and the state to provide specific services turns out to be relatively rare in the contemporary period. There are few documented instances of traditional leaders competing with the state to provide local public goods or services; for example, traditional leaders do not typically engage in running schools or providing health care in parallel to the government's efforts. The result is that traditional leaders do not provide citizens a viable alternative option to the state in these sectors. The exception is the justice sector, where traditional courts often do run in parallel to the formal justice system. This creates situations where some citizens are in a position to choose whether to pursue justice in the customary or formal justice system. Corstange (2008) draws on public opinion data from Yemen to show that some groups

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[10]For a similar distinction between "parallel" and "interactive" approaches to the study of traditional governance, see Holzinger, Kern and Kromrey (2015).

view tribal judicial institutions as a favorable substitute for state courts in settings where state capacity to enforce the rule of law is weak. Sandefur and Siddiqi (2013) also draw on survey data to show that citizens in rural Liberia rationally weigh the favorability of the treatment they can expect in each court system against the cost of accessing it when deciding where to take disputes.

In theory, competition between state courts and traditional courts could improve the state's administration of justice. However, Hartman (2015)'s dissertation on conflict resolution in Liberia argues that they can also harm it, because disputants must be able to coordinate on a dispute resolution mechanism if disputes are to be resolved quickly and peacefully. Drawing on evidence from an original database of 958 conflicts, she shows that in areas where the formal Liberian justice system faces competition from traditional institutions, conflicts that emerge are more prolonged and violent. However, her analysis does not distinguish between disputes first taken to traditional courts and disputes first taken to official state courts, so it is not clear whether state courts are less effective in the presence of traditional courts or whether traditional courts are simply less effective than state courts.

Another instance of the parallel operation of traditional and non-traditional institutions was created as the result of a donor-funded intervention in Afghanistan. Specifically, elected village councils were created in parallel to the existing traditional governance institutions as part of a randomized control trial. Here, Beath, Christia and Enikolopov (2013a) find that in villages where the two parallel leadership institutions were tasked with the distribution of food aid, embezzlement and mismanagement increased, compared to villages where either the traditional or the new elected leaders were explicitly tasked. This suggests that the introduction of parallel systems of governance without a clear allocation of responsibilities can have adverse effects on the quality of local public good provision.

The Effects of Mediated Citizen-State Relationships

More often than compete with the state, traditional leaders mediate relationships between citizens and elected leaders. This mediation has varying effects on the quality of service delivery. As we have discussed above, traditional leaders tend to have mobilization and coordination capacity among their communities, rendering them potentially effective brokers for development and service delivery, especially in settings where local state institutions are weak (Baldwin, 2013, 2016b). In addition, they may act as checks and balances to state institutions by coordinating collective action and by holding government officials accountable through informal channels and shared norms (Tsai, 2007a,b). However, in settings where traditional leaders are not accountable to their communities, they may take advantage of their roles as intermediaries between citizens and state and use it to amass personal rents.

There are two sets of studies that are relevant to this section of our review, the first comparing the effects of strong versus weak chiefs on government performance and the second comparing

the effects of traditional leaders' integration into the formal political system on government service provision. In the first category of studies, Schultz, Wibbels and Huntington (2015) argue that strong chiefs in Ghana use their influence to mediate the relationship between voters and formal government institutions, resulting in lower levels of clientelism and better service provision. Ironically, this also results in a better perception of government institutions among voters. Strong chiefs, so the argument goes, have a greater capacity to mobilize votes than weak ones. Their capacity to mobilize votes renders them important assets for politicians who seek to maximize their vote share. Since Ghanaian chiefs tend to be embedded in their communities they have an incentive to ensure that the government provides goods and services. They therefore use their bargaining position vis a vis politicians to negotiate for better service delivery in return for votes. In areas where there are no strong chiefs, on the other hand, politicians have to rely on clientelism and vote-buying to garner votes. Hence, strong chiefs serve as a substitute for clientelistic vote brokers, with better development outcomes. One can think of them as bundling votes, thus helping their constituents to overcome collective action problems and negotiating a better deal: service delivery instead of vote buying. Results from surveys and survey experimental data collected from voters, administrators and elected leaders in 150 rural districts of Ghana support the argument.

In addition, strong traditional leaders can serve as important checks and balances to the state. In Senegal, Honig (2015) finds that having traditional leaders mediate the relationship with the state can help protect communities from expropriation of communal land. The first part of the empirical analysis compares areas formerly colonized by the French or the British within the Senegal River Valley. British colonizers are argued to have led through indirect rule, thereby allowing traditional governance institutions to survive. This contrasts with the approach taken by French colonizers, who installed their own administrators, hence replacing existing governance institutions and power structures. Honig presents case study evidence that traditional leaders in the areas formerly ruled by the British now help protect communities from the cessation of communal land by the state by coordinating collective action. The second part of the empirical analysis combines data on all new land titles in Senegal between 2007 and 2013 with data on pre-colonial governance structures and finds that higher levels of centralization of pre-colonial governance institutions are associated with fewer land cessations by the state today, suggesting that traditional governance institutions persist and continue to play a role in facilitating collective action and shaping property rights.

Similarly, in Afghanistan, Murtazashvili (2016) finds that traditional councils (*shuras*) provide an important counterbalance to the power of the central state. Drawing on public opinion data, she finds that citizens have better views of the performance of the central government in communities where *shuras* have a greater presence. She argues that most Afghan citizens are wary of the power of the central government and so powerful village-level customary institutions provide an important check.

Other relevant studies focus not on variation in the strength of traditional institutions but on variation in how integrated they are with other government actors. Baldwin (2013, 2016*b*) argues that the state's performance in delivering basic services is improved when political representatives have stronger relationships with local traditional leaders. Drawing on observational evidence from Zambia, she shows that the government is more effective in building schools and rehabilitating roads in rural areas when elected Members of Parliaments have longer relationships with the local chief. Strong relationships between chiefs and politicians are beneficial in part because they allow chiefs to better lobby for public goods for their communities, as Schultz, Wibbels and Huntington (2015) also find in Ghana. However, they are also important because the delivery of services typically requires the mobilization of local resources to complement state funding, and traditional chiefs with stronger relationships to elected politicians are more likely to collaborate effectively with them to "co-produce" services.

In contrast, Clayton, Noveck and Levi (2015) find that traditional leaders only serve as effective checks and balances if they do *not* have a close relationship with elected local councilors. Using data from two national surveys conducted in Sierra Leone, they find that areas in which elected councilors have frequent contact with and/or share a large number of familiar ties with the paramount chief, citizens exhibit lower satisfaction with the quality of local public goods and lower utilization rates of public health facilities and schools. In contrast, areas in which councilors reported frequent conflicts with the paramount chief experienced improvements in local development outcomes. The authors conclude that in Sierra Leone inter-elite competition – rather than collaboration – between local councilors and paramount chiefs is conducive to the quality of local service delivery.

Finally, in China, Xu and Yao (2015) find that public goods provision is higher when the elected village head is a member of one of the two largest lineage groups in the village, suggesting greater integration of traditional institutions and formal state institutions. Using panel data on 220 Chinese villages between 1986 to 2005, they find that village members' contributions to village-level public investments are higher when the elected village head is a member of one of the two largest lineage groups in the village. In contrast, Mattingly (2015) suggests that integration into the state may weaken the downward accountability of traditional lineage leaders in China in a way that harms their ability to protect citizens from government predation. Autonomous lineage leaders may play an important role in protecting communities from land cessations, but when lineage leaders are elected to official village leadership positions and become part of the Chinese state apparatus, he argues that they use their traditional legitimacy to confiscate land on behalf of the central government.[11] Mattingly uses a national survey to show that villages in which the clan

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[11]Note, however, that it is impossible to disentangle election to formal office and the appreciation of land value here, as the two are highly correlated.

chief becomes a village official are 14 to 20 percent more likely to experience land confiscations, resulting in measurable negative welfare effects. A survey experiment and case studies corroborate that an endorsement by the clan chief increases compliance with confiscation plans.

Thus, the effects of traditional leaders on government performance is not straightforward. Stronger traditional leaders improve government performance in Ghana, Senegal and Afghanistan by lobbying and checking the state. Traditional leaders with stronger ties to formal politics improve governance in the case of local public goods provision in both Zambia and China, but harm it in the case of service delivery in Sierra Leone and land reform in China. How are we to make sense of these different findings? Part, but not all, of the answer is the different downward accountability of leaders in these different settings, which we discuss in the next sub-section, before turning to a discussion of additional factors.

Government Performance by Traditional Leader's Characteristics

One important type of variation to consider is differences in the incentives and downward accountability of traditional leaders and customary institutions. In Sierra Leone, Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson (2014) find that competitively selected leaders are less likely to collude with the state, resulting in higher levels of local development. Competitively selected chiefs are defined as those coming from chiefdoms with a greater number of ruling families, a plausibly exogenous characteristic. Therefore, they face greater political competition and see a greater need to negotiate constraints with the other ruling families in order to ensure the future of their lineage.[12] Competitively selected chiefs are more likely to allocate resources to education and to let constituents resell their land, resulting in higher local economic development.

In the Chinese context, Tsai (2007a) compares the efficacy of a variety of village-level informal institutions in improving governance based on the extent to which they embed leaders in their networks and the extent to which they encompass all citizens. She finds that temple groups are effective in mobilizing pressure on local leaders to provide local public goods, as are lineage groups in homogeneous villages, but church groups and lineage groups in heterogeneous villages are not. She argues only in the first two sets of cases are informal institutions both embedding and encompassing, thereby explaining the difference. This argument, which focuses on the proportion of citizens included in the traditional institution in which official leaders are integrated, has important parallels to our emphasis on traditional leaders being embedded in their broader communities if they are to play a positive role. It also emphasizes the importance of geographic overlap between traditional and formal spheres of influence, a point we return to later. Thus, variation in the characteristics of traditional institutions, and especially their downward accountability, is critical in understanding why traditional leaders sometimes improve and sometimes harm government

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[12] And/or communities are able to select a better traditional leader when picking from a larger pool.

performance.

Explaining Variation in Traditional Leader's Effects on Government Performance

Our divergent findings can largely be explained by two factors, where the first factor is whether the incentives of the traditional leaders are aligned with those of their constituents, or, in other words, whether they are downwardly accountable. As argued above, downward accountability is shaped by the competitiveness of the selection process and by the degree of social and economic embeddedness. The second factor is whether the government's interests are aligned with those of its citizens. Note that this may vary from context to context – a given state may act in the interest of citizens in some instances or at some levels of decentralization, but not in others.

In cases where traditional leaders are downwardly accountable and the state seeks to deliver services, traditional leaders can play an important role in co-producing public goods and services, as described in the cases of Ghana (Schultz, Wibbels and Huntington, 2015), Zambia (Baldwin, 2016b), and local officials in China ((Xu and Yao, 2015)). In instances where traditional leaders are downwardly accountable and the state's development goals directly conflict with those of its citizens, strong traditional leaders can serve as checks and balances, as was observed in the case of land reforms in Senegal (Honig, 2015). If, however, traditional leaders are not downwardly accountable and the state is predatory, traditional leaders are likely to collude with the state, as was found by Mattingly (2015) in China. Finally, if traditional leaders are not downwardly accountable and a state is seeking to deliver goods and services, traditional leaders may at best be irrelevant to governance but at worst harm it, as appears to be the case of paramount chiefs in Sierra Leone (Clayton, Noveck and Levi, 2015), who are able to impede service delivery by the local government.

2.3   Effects of Traditional Chiefs on Democratic Norms and Electoral Accountability

What is the role of traditional chiefs in elections and democratic development in general? One area of contention is whether the existence of traditional chiefs, and customary institutions more broadly, furthers or harms democratic *attitudes, norms and rights*. Some scholars maintain that because traditional leaders are not elected, their existence fosters undemocratic norms. (Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2005; Mamdani, 1996).

Recent empirical work questions this assessment. In Afghanistan, Murtazashvili (2016) finds that customary institutions are associated with more *positive* views of democratic governance. Using data from two nationwide surveys, she finds that in communities where customary councils (*shuras*) are stronger, citizens are more likely to think that their vote is influential, to tolerate opposing parties, to believe that opposition is good for Afghanistan, and to support women's rights.

Similarly, analyzing nationally representative data[13] from nineteen African countries, Logan (2009, 2013) finds that respondents who view traditional leaders positively tend to have a more positive attitude towards their elected leaders as well. The perception index includes measures of trustworthiness, interest and involvement in corruption. She concludes that African citizens view traditional and elected leaders as parts of an integrated system. Logan (2013) does not find any relationship between support for traditional leaders and commitment to democracy.

A particular area of concern for many donor agencies is the influence of traditional leaders on attitudes towards women. Most traditional leaders are male, and they are often accused of bias against women in their decision-making. However, the empirical evidence on the effect of traditional leaders on women's rights is also ambiguous. Clayton (2014) uses randomized quotas for female councilors in Lesotho to show that the political influence of traditional leaders may be at odds with the political influence of women; in places with quota-mandated female councilors, respondents perceive traditional leaders as having reduced influence. Similarly, Beath, Christia and Enikolopov (2013b) find that the displacement of traditional governance structures with gender-inclusive village development committees in randomly selected villages in Afghanistan results in improved attitudes toward women's political participation. Yet, it is not clear that weaker traditional institutions would by themselves advance women's rights, or, conversely, that stronger traditional institutions necessarily harm them; in fact, Murtazashvili (2016) finds that in Afghani villages where traditional shuras are strong, citizens are more likely to express support for women's rights.

A second area of contention is whether the existence of strong chiefs hampers or helps communities in holding their elected leaders to account. Two different narratives have been presented in the academic literature. One casts chiefs as clientelistic vote brokers, who deliver votes to the candidate who gives them the highest personal benefits, with negative implications for development. The other casts them as representatives of their constituents' interests who mobilize votes in return for future service delivery, or 'development brokers', with positive consequences for development (Baldwin, 2016b). Gottlieb (2015) makes a similar distinction when she argues that brokers might lead to coordination on leader-preferred outcomes (negative) or voter-preferred outcomes (positive).

Baldwin (2013, 2016b) provides evidence that chiefs in Africa have limited ability to deliver votes to candidates that citizens do not genuinely prefer. Instead, she argues that – to the extent that chiefs are able to mobilize votes for candidates that the chiefs prefer – it is a function of their recognized role as "development brokers." Communities on average receive more public goods in cases where their chiefs have stronger relationships to elected officials. When voters

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[13]Rounds 1, 2 and 4 of the Afrobarometer.

recognize this, they have incentives to vote with their chiefs to ensure they elect the candidate who will perform best in providing access to public goods once in office. She provides evidence from a survey experiment in Zambia that shows the types of respondents who are most influenced by finding out their chiefs' true opinions of candidates are respondents who recognize the role of chiefs as "development brokers," not respondents who are motivated by concerns about punishment or other mechanisms that could underlie clientelistic brokering. Similarly, Schultz, Wibbels and Huntington (2015) find that in Ghana stronger chiefs are associated with better service delivery and less vote-buying and clientelism, as discussed in greater detail in the previous section.

Koter (2013) examines the role of traditional leaders in building cross-ethnic allegiances during elections in Senegal and Benin. She argues that the relatively strong traditional leaders in Senegal facilitate voting across ethnic lines, while the absence of strong traditional leaders in Benin leads to the predominance of ethnic bloc voting. Relying on strong local leaders to mobilize votes enables politicians to make appeals across ethnic lines instead of making ethnic appeals, thus reducing ethnic bloc voting and ultimately increasing political competition. Traditional leaders exchange vote mobilization against service delivery for their communities and (at times) personal benefits. Both sides to the bargain – politicians and traditional leaders – seek the best potential partner to close a deal in the market of votes against services and/or material benefits. Drawing on case studies in Benin and Senegal, Koter argues that the collaboration between politicians and traditional leaders is not constrained by ethnicity, since both sides have an incentive to grow their pool of potential partners.

On the other hand, De Kadt and Larreguy (2014) find that some South African traditional chiefs act as clientelistic vote brokers for co-ethnic politicians, with adverse effects on electoral accountability. Using two sources of arguably exogenous variation, the borders of the Bantustan homelands where traditional chiefs wield a lot of influence and a one-time switch in the ethnicity of the ANC president from Xhosa to Zulu, the authors argue the chiefs will engage in a quid pro quo with elected leaders if they are ethnically aligned. The legal status of these chiefs is fragile and their income is largely dependent on the state. In return for continued tenure and personal rents, they deliver votes. They find that the support of chiefs increases the ANC vote share in the Bantustans by 8.2 percentage points and significantly influences the distribution of seats in the national Parliament. The authors provide suggestive evidence that the underlying mechanism is vote buying and intimidation, rather than service delivery.

A related question, but with a different outcome variable, is whether the involvement of different types of traditional leaders results in more or less alignment on elite-preferred (versus voter-preferred) outcomes. Taking advantage of variation with regard to the degree of (i) competitive selection and (ii) autonomy of traditional leaders from the community across societies in Senegal, Gottlieb (2015) designed and conducted behavioral games to assess how these factors affect

strategic interactions between voters and traditional leaders. She finds that voters are more likely to follow their traditional leaders if they are relatively independent from the community even when it implies personal sacrifices. A manipulation in the confidentiality of the games suggests that this finding is explained by a fear of sanctions, rather than greater legitimacy.

Taken together, these studies suggest that the degree of dependency on the formal government is important in determining the role chiefs play in elections. The legal status and rents of the traditional chiefs in Bantustans are dependent on the state, while Zambian chiefs are more dependent on their communities. Senegalese chiefs vary from group to group, a fact that's exploited in Gottlieb (2015)'s subnational study. If politicians prefer clientelism to service delivery, chiefs who are dependent on the state have little leverage, regardless of their preferences. What is more, if chiefs do not depend on the community for survival, they have little incentive to bargain for service delivery instead of personal rents.

3 Traditional Leaders and Development Policy

Development practitioners working in a wide variety of sectors confront the question of how best to work with traditional leaders. Practitioners working in fields like governance, security reform and justice have to decide at a strategic level whether engagement with traditional institutions is a programming goal (Denney, 2013). However, even practitioners working in fields that appear on first glance to have little to do with local governance – such as health care and basic infrastructure – must often make tactical decisions about how best to engage with traditional leaders (Sheely, 2013b; Vajja and White, 2006). In this section, we describe with very broad brush strokes the two most typical donor strategies toward traditional leaders – strategies of exclusion and disempowerment versus strategies of recognition and reform. We try to synthesize the lessons policy makers have taken from evaluations of both types of strategies with the findings from our review of the academic literature.

3.1 Strategy # 1: Exclusion and Disempowerment

Historically, donors have typically chosen to exclude or ignore traditional institutions when designing development programming strategies. As Denney (2013) explains in a recent review, traditional institutions are a tricky target of engagement for aid agencies, which are bureaucratic organizations who take their own legitimacy from modern legal-rational processes and who must ultimately justify their actions to voters in liberal democracies who are uncomfortable with traditional forms of governance. The results of donor's discomfort with customary institutions were policies such as the 1975 World Bank land reform policy that recommended an abandonment of communal tenure

systems (Deininger and Binswanger, 1999) and good governance programs that focused exclusively on reforms to institutions like the civil service, the formal judiciary and the central bank (Grindle, 2004, 2007; Kelsall, 2008). Although donors have generally become more accommodating toward engaging customary institutions in recent years, in some programming areas, such as community-driven development projects, aid agencies still adopt rules that exclude traditional leaders from participating.[14]

However, policies that seek to disempower customary institutions or exclude traditional leaders as a general rule are rarely optimal. In a best case scenario, their blanket approach fails to take advantage of the unique mobilizational capacities of these actors in many communities. In a worst case scenario, they may undermine the only institutions capable of providing critical public goods in a particular setting. As the evidence presented in section 2.1 showed, traditional leaders are often very effective in organizing communities to provide public goods. The studies reviewed in this section all focused on cases where formal state institutions were weak, but in these settings, traditional institutions often performed better than other available partners in providing local public goods. Aid programs that fail to include traditional leaders as development partners in settings where traditional leaders are socially and economically embedded in communities and alternative partners are weak are unlikely to have maximum possible impact.

3.2 Strategy # 2: Recognition and Reform

In reaction to past strategies of excluding and disempowering traditional institutions, a small but growing group within the aid community has begun to grapple with alternative modes of engaging with the customary. In the past decade, some development practitioners have embraced notions of "good enough governance" (Grindle, 2004, 2007) and "going with the grain" in development (Kelsall, 2008), concepts which emphasize the need to work with the de facto structures of power on the ground. In this vein, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) sponsored its "Driver's of Change" research program in 2004, which aimed to uncover the informal and formal institutions influencing development initiatives in 20 countries, and followed this study up with the Africa Power and Politics Programme in 2007, which was intended to study the nature of power on the African sub-continent specifically. Inevitably, these approaches pointed toward the importance of traditional leaders and customary institutions in many communities.

In tandem with this shift in perspective, some aid agencies have become more willing to sponsor governance programs intended to recognize or reform traditional institutions. Particularly in post-conflict settings, some donors have embraced the idea of supporting traditional leaders and their courts as a means of re-establishing order. An early example of a donor-sponsored program

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[14]Personal communications with Eric Mvukiyehe, World Bank, January 4th 2016 and Sheree Bennett, IRC, December 24, 2015.

in this vein is the USAID-sponsored Decentralization/Traditional Authority (DTA) Program in Mozambique, which organized district-level workshops to gauge support for traditional authorities immediately after the end of the civil war in that country and then distributed brochures on the topic of traditional authority to government officials and made recommendations to the government regarding policy toward them (Fry, 1997). DFID supported a similar Chiefdom Governance Reform Program (CGRP) in Sierra Leone between 1999 and 2002, sponsoring public workshops in 75 chiefdoms to gauge support for the re-establishment of paramount chiefs, supporting elections in cases where the position of paramount chief was vacant, and facilitating the repatriation of chiefs and the construction of houses for them (Fanthorpe, 2004). Another ambitious effort has been the pilot project run by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in six districts in Afghanistan since 2009; this project has involved both researching the landscape of informal justice providers that exists in each district and then making proposals regarding the best way to make reforms (Dempsey and Coburn, 2010). Other aid agencies and NGOs have organized smaller scale efforts to engage with and reform traditional institutions, especially in the judicial sector.

Both USAID's DTA program in Mozambique and DFID's CGRP in Sierra Leone were evaluated at length by consultants, and these reports indicate the minefields involved when donors engage with traditional leaders (Fry, 1997; Fanthorpe, 2004). For example, the DTA program in Mozambique was ostensibly mainly a research program; however, even just the organization of district-level consultations on the topic of traditional leaders gave many people the impression that traditional leadership – which had been formally abolished by the Mozambican government in 1978 – had been sanctioned by donors and the government. As an academic involved in the mid-term evaluation of the program wrote, some traditional authorities took the workshops themselves "as a mandate to tell their communities that they once again had authority to govern"[15]. This impression was particularly unfortunate because, although the project ultimately did prepare policy documents recommending official recognition of these leaders for the Mozambican government, these recommendations were not adopted. Instead, the most lasting impact of the program appears to have been the socialization of government officials so that they accepted the idea of working with traditional authorities(Fry, 1997; West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). The government ultimately adopted a more flexible law that called for official recognition of traditional authorities at the discretion of the local community (Buur and Kyed, 2006).

The CGRP sponsored by DFID in Sierra Leone also illustrates the problems posed by donor recognition of specific traditional authorities. The CGRP had the goal of building houses for each of the future paramount chiefs but, because different ruling families often lived in different towns, the decision about where to build the house implicitly favored some ruling families over others (Denney, 2013, pg. 6). In addition, DFID was accused of political bias because, for security

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[15]Cited in Fry (1997, pg. 6).

reasons, the program operated only in areas of the country that also happened to be historic government strongholds. Ultimately, this program was deemed a failure and was aborted in 2002 after review (Denney, 2013, pg. 12).

One of the main lessons that DFID appears to have taken from the failure of the CGRP in Sierra Leone is the difficulty of engaging with traditional authorities without simultaneously reforming them (Denney, 2013; Fanthorpe, 2006). But, in fact, both the evidence from the DTA and CGRP evaluations and the academic literature suggest the challenge of ensuring donors constructively engage with traditional authorities cannot be solved by reforms from above. One critical take-away from our review of the academic literature is that the extent to which traditional chiefs facilitate rather than hamper economic and political development is a function of their dependence on and embeddedness in their communities. Donor engagement with traditional leaders may reduce their local dependence, especially when this engagement involves the transfer of substantial resources, like the houses built with DFID's support in Sierra Leone. However, even in cases when this engagement involves little transfer of material resources, as in the case of the USAID-sponsored program in Mozambique, donor engagement may give the impression that these leaders have mandates from above and thereby reduce their local embeddedness. Thus, traditional leader's degree of embeddedness is both an important criterion to consider when deciding whether or not to design programming to explicitly involve traditional leaders and a caution to donors: Insofar as the formal recognition of and material support to traditional governance institutions makes traditional leaders less dependent on their communities, such initiatives may very well backfire.

3.3   A Way Forward for Engaging Traditional Leaders?

Is there a way for aid practitioners to simultaneously make sure they design programs that are maximally effective by engaging with traditional leaders when they are powerful and locally embedded without undermining the linkages that exist between these leaders and their communities? In our view, this is the critical challenge for aid agencies. It requires creative and flexible program designs, but it is not an impossible needle to thread.

In one promising example, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) tested an innovative approach to reforming village-level traditional institutions in Eastern Zimbabwe. Their goal was to make the village head's court more adherent to process, less biased, and therefore more effective in resolving conflict. The IRC was also concerned with determining the best way to make reforms without undermining the authority of village-level customary leaders. As a result, they tested two variants of their program in a randomized control trial. In the first variant of the program, the village heads were engaged in classic "capacity building" workshops run by the donor in conjunction with local NGOs and the government; donors frequently use this approach when engaging with

traditional leaders, but – in a worst case scenario – it could be not just ineffective but detrimental to the perceived local embeddedness of these leaders. In the second variant of the program, both the village head and a second community leader were included in the workshop, with the hope that the second leader would help mediate the effect of the workshop on the village head's behavior. In this way, it was hoped that any change in behavior would be locally enforced and the village head would become more, not less, beholden to community pressures. Indeed, the results of the program evaluation suggest that only the second variant was effective in changing the behavior of the village head, and this variant also resulted in village heads who were viewed as more locally legitimate (Baldwin, Muyengwa and Mvukiyehe, 2016).

Thus, constructive engagement with traditional leaders is possible. Development practitioners deciding on the degree to which to integrate and engage with traditional leaders should therefore ask themselves two series of questions: First, to what degree are the traditional leaders accountable to their communities? And are they likely more or less accountable than the alternative partners who would be engaged in the program? Second, will the involvement of traditional leaders in the program make them less embedded in, and thus less accountable to, their communities? If this is a concern, are there ways to design the program so that it increases rather than decreases the embeddedness of traditional leaders?

4   Areas for Further Research

The study of the effects of traditional leaders on service delivery and political accountability is still a developing field, as evidenced by the fact that more than half of the citations in the references to this chapter are from the past five years. As a result, there is room for more research in a wide variety of areas. In this section, we highlight two avenues for further research that we view as particularly relevant for the aid community.

As a first priority, we recommend data collection efforts that would allow researchers and aid practitioners to better distinguish within the broad set of leaders that fall under the definition of traditional chiefs. At the moment, there are three large-scale data sets available on traditional leadership, each of which has limitations. First, there is data on the types of institutions that governed regions in the pre-colonial era (Murdock, 1967), which is interesting in its own right but does not necessarily correspond in a predictable fashion with the types of traditional institutions that exist in these regions in the contemporary period. Second, there has been a recent effort by a team of researchers at the University Konstanz to collect data on the legal integration of traditional institutions into state's political systems in sub-Saharan Africa (Holzinger, Kern and Kromrey, 2013). This is also valuable information, but does not provide us with information on the de facto power of chiefs or within-country variation in the status of these leaders. Finally, the Afrobarometer sur-

vey, especially the fourth round of the survey, collected data on citizens' perceptions of traditional leaders in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Logan, 2009, 2013). This data begins to permit examination of regional differences in the status of traditional leaders. However, besides existing only for 19 African countries, it does not easily allow us to distinguish between how citizens feel about different traditional leaders; the survey questions do not distinguish between leaders at different levels of the traditional hierarchy, making it impossible to distinguish between how people feel about paramount chiefs versus village headmen, and in most countries, we do not know how the survey lines up with the geographic boundaries of different traditional chiefdoms and territories.

We recommend additional data collection in order to better understand the lay of the land in this area. Unfortunately, for this data collection process to be valuable, it will likely be time intensive and costly. Due to the fact that there is great variation in the extent to which traditional institutions are incorporated into the state, we see inherent limitations in working only with official data provided by the state to try to map out these institutions. Instead, both surveys of traditional leaders themselves and surveys of citizens are likely to be necessary in order to understand the variety of traditional leaders that exist in different communities, their de facto power, and the extent to which they are downwardly accountable. In particular, in order to distinguish between leaders who can act as development partners and those who cannot, we recommend including suites of questions on the methods by which these leaders are selected and internal governance structures (to get at competitiveness) but also their social ties and their sources of economic revenue (to get at embeddedness). In addition, we recommend collecting detailed data on the geographic spheres of different traditional leaders in order to be able to better map out overlap with administrative boundaries.

As a second priority, we recommend additional research on the effect of donor engagement and government intervention on how embedded traditional leaders are in their communities. As we noted in the previous section, a critical challenge for aid agencies is to figure out how to harness the potential benefits of partnering with locally embedded traditional leaders without undermining the ties that bind these leaders to their communities. Even in circumstances where it appears that governance may be better when strong traditional institutions have organically developed ties to elected political leaders and state institutions, as in Zambia and Ghana, it does not necessarily hold that donor-led or state-led efforts to increase the integration of these two sets of leaders would improve governance (Baldwin, 2016b; Schultz, Wibbels and Huntington, 2015). Furthermore, the mere act of donor acknowledgement of traditional institutions can be enough to change the relationships of these institutions to their communities, as the cautionary example of the DTA program in Mozambique suggests (Fry, 1997).

In fact, research on whether the effects of aid agencies' efforts to engage with traditional institutions has unintended consequences for the legitimacy of traditional institutions should be relatively

easy to accomplish. Although donors may naturally be primarily interested in the immediate effects of involving traditional leaders on the main outcomes of interest in their particular sectors, whether this is infrastructure delivery, justice, security or overall governance, in cases where the effects of incorporating traditional leaders on these outcomes are being systematically evaluated, it should be relatively cheap to also consider whether the programming influences the operation of traditional institutions. Evaluations of programs incorporating traditional leaders should measure whether the programs affect the operation of the traditional institutions with which they engage, even when this is not the explicit goal of the program.

5 Conclusion

The empirical literature on the interaction between traditional leaders and formal state institutions is a relatively recent and diverse body of work. While traditional governance institutions are a broad term, consistent data on them is still wanting, and many of the findings are context specific, we see several consistent patterns emerge from the existing evidence.

We conclude from the studies on traditional leaders' role in the provision of decentralized public goods that traditional chiefs are often very effective in organizing local public goods that require high levels of community contributions and/or compliance. In weak states, traditional leaders play critical roles in facilitating local public goods, although they appear more effective in sectors where they have a tradition of involvement and less effective when they are asked to take on new tasks.

Our findings are more complicated regarding the effects of traditional leaders on the government's performance in providing services. The dynamics of the interaction between traditional leaders and governments vary depending on the downward accountability of the traditional leaders and the incentives of the government. The extent to which traditional leaders are locally embedded appears especially important in determining whether their role as intermediaries between citizens and the state has beneficial or harmful effects on government performance.

Finally, we reviewed the evidence on the role of traditional leaders with regard to democratic norms and electoral accountability. None of the reviewed studies find that either the presence of or support for traditional leaders are associated with lower levels of support for democratic norms. Here again we conclude that the degree of dependency on the formal government is important in determining the role chiefs play in elections. When the legal status and livelihood of traditional chiefs depends on the state, they are likely to use their position to deliver votes in return for personal benefits. On the other hand, when chiefs are both strong and embedded into their communities, then they are likely to use their leverage as potential vote bundlers in order to negotiate for improved service delivery.

Based both on the academic literature and a review of a number of recent policy programs, we conclude that a constructive engagement with traditional leaders is possible. Development practitioners deciding on the degree to which to engage with and integrate traditional leaders should therefore ask themselves two broad sets of questions: First, to what degree are the traditional leaders accountable to their communities (especially compared to alternative partners)? Second, will the involvement of traditional leaders in the program make them less embedded in, and thus less accountable to, their communities? By carefully considering these two factors, aid agencies can design programs that harness the benefits of partnering with traditional leaders without undermining their local legitimacy.

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7 Appendix

Table 2: Covariates of embeddedness

| | Social embeddedness | | | | | | | Economic embeddedness | | | | | | |
| | Embedded | | Not embedded | | | | | Embedded | | Not embedded | | | |
Variable	n	mean	n	mean	p-value			n	mean	n	mean	p-value
Distance to Lusaka (km)	47	466	61	375	0.009			44	449	66	384	0.069
% of chiefdom population working in agriculture	47	76%	61	76%	0.996			44	83%	66	71%	0.005
% of chiefdom pop. with formal full-time work	47	3%	61	3%	0.577			44	2%	66	3%	0.142
Chief belongs to centralized ethnic group	47	38%	61	52%	0.146			44	70%	66	29%	0.000
Chief is senior chief	47	11%	61	11%	0.892			44	7%	66	14%	0.265
ELF	47	0.42	61	0.37	0.251			44	0.37	66	0.42	0.227
% of chiefdom pop. in chief's ethnic group	47	65%	61	68%	0.479			44	63%	66	68%	0.281
Population of chiefdom	47	16,856	61	19,081	0.444			44	18,264	66	17,940	0.911

Notes: Data is from a survey with 110 traditional leaders in Zambia. Social embeddedness is proxied by not traveling to the national capital for any but medical reasons. Economic embeddedness is proxied by owning a local business.