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LEGITIMACY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY IN AFRICA: K.A. APPIAH'S APPROACH AND ITS CRITIQUE

Legitimacy is one of the key notions of political and social science and is inseparably linked to ideas such as the state, power, citizens, rights and obligations, etc. Definitions continue to be the subject of much debate, but I will confine myself here to the one proposed by Bertrand Badie. In his view, "legitimacy may be defined as the formula by which individuals accept a power and consider their obedience as a just commitment."[1] When rulers wield power they have no right to wield, it is said that they exert power without legitimacy. Legitimacy concerns the relation between citizens, or subjects, and the state authority or, as in Sub-Saharan Africa, the local traditional authority. Above all, it involves such basic issues as the subjects' or citizens' submission to, or compliance with, the decisions made by the authorities and the right of the state or traditional authority to limit the subjects' or citizens' freedom.

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[1] Bertrand Badie, "Legitimacy, sociology of," *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), Vol. 13, pp. 8706-9 at p. 8706. In Roger Scruton's (*A Dictionary of Political Thought* [London: Macmillan, 1996], p. 307) view the related term "legitimation" refers to "the process whereby power gains acceptance for itself in the eyes of those who are governed by it, by generating a belief in its legitimacy". The term legitimation is at times used in the literature in the meaning of "legitimacy". In this article the term "legitimation" is not used.

The authorities in today's democratic states draw their legitimacy from the will of the electorate as expressed through elections. Nonetheless, even in such a seemingly ideal state of affairs, legitimacy is at times a subject of discussion. Seymour Martin Lipset says in this context that legitimacy is evaluative and considers that people of a state recognize a political system as legitimate or not "according to the way in which its values fit with theirs."[2] Thus, for example, when in a democratic state a candidate we support is elected to office we automatically recognize that candidate as having legitimacy. If the same elections are won by a candidate whom we do not trust or support, we may question that person's legitimacy, especially if he or she was elected in conditions of low voter turnout.

In the states of post-colonial Africa, the problem of legitimacy is much more complicated than in the Western world. Although Max Weber distinguished three pure types of legitimate authority, considering that "the validity of claims to legitimacy may be based on:"[3] rational, traditional, or charismatic grounds[4], David Beetham held the view that this typology is inadequate given the wide variety of power types existing in the 20th century.[5] Beetham's views partially reflect the situation which arose in Africa. In the case of many post-colonial African states, traditional authority, which is connected with the faith

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[2] Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p. 64.

[3] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 328.

[4] On charismatic rule connected with the subjects' emotional devotion to the ruler and their recognition for his charisma one can speak of in the case of certain African states created in the decolonization period, especially when they were headed by leaders of various national liberation movements. In terms of traditional authority one can speak of charismatic rule especially in the context of reign of a ruler in possession of magic abilities. Cf. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, pp. 358-9 where the author writes that the term "charisma" is applied to "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader."

[5] David Beetham, "Political legitimacy," *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, eds. K. Nash, A. Scott (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 107-16 at p. 107.

of the ruled in the sanctity of the traditional order and in the power of the ruler, exists on the local level side by side with the legal national authority (which is based on election, appointment, or other means). In many African states, numerous different pre-colonial systems of power – such as kingships, sultanates or chieftaincies – which have a traditional legitimacy often confirmed in colonial and post-colonial times, have survived till our day. Their role in the contemporary republican state has been studied by many African intellectuals, and the views of Kwame Anthony Appiah,[6] a thinker originating from Ghana, are of particular interest. He believes that in order to understand the significance of traditional authority and the phenomenon of its continued existence in contemporary Africa, it is important to consider the source of its legitimacy.

Appiah presents various sources – symbolic, religious and state – from which local African rulers derive the right to exert power and to exact obedience from their subjects. He minimizes the significance of most of these, however, and concludes that the basic source of legitimacy for traditional authority in the contemporary African state is the fact that this power, being a very important point of reference for the group over which it is wielded, reinforces its members' sense of self-respect, and helps form their identity. He uses this idea to attempt to reconcile the continued existence of African power systems with liberal theory.

Appiah, who is very unfavourably disposed towards most political and social hierarchies, views the political rights of individuals as the rights of citizens,[7] not as the rights of persons who are the depositaries of some attributed or hereditary status. He enumerates the costs, in terms of liberal principles,

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[6] Kwame Anthony Appiah (born in 1954) is also a novelist, a professor at Princeton University, author of many works on the philosophy of culture, language, the mind, politics and ethics. He presently writes on questions of race, identity and cosmopolitanism, among other subjects.

[7] Appiah uses the term "citizen" in both a legal sense (see "juridical citizen" in his *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], p. 148) and a political one. In the latter case, however, he also uses the term "subject" in connection with the position of individuals in African states (see *ibid.*, p. 171). On the lack of clarity, consequence, or exact definition of the term "citizen" in political thinking see Krzysztof Trzciński, "A reversal of perspective: the subject as citizen under absolute monarchy, or the ambiguity of notions," *The State and Development in Africa and Other Regions: Past and Present*, ed. K. Trzciński (Warszawa: ASPRA-JR, 2007), pp. 319-32.

of allowing traditional monarchy to persist. In his view, it is contrary to the liberal principle of public offices being open to persons of merit for the king of the Ashanti to be chosen from among persons of royal lineage. Given that the Ashanti are not a private association, he thinks that the principles of membership and exclusion from the community "distinguish among citizens in ways that might ordinarily be thought to be discriminatory."[8] Moreover, he admits that traditional monarchy preserves forms of social hierarchy that are inconsistent with the liberal principle of the equal dignity of all persons.[9] Such a perspective should generate a generally negative attitude towards the monarchy of the Ashanti, a people from whom he originates, and yet he views the Ashanti's traditional monarchy as a source of pride.

TRADITIONAL MONARCHY AND ITS SOURCES OF LEGITIMACY

Appiah takes a critical view of most of the roles ascribed to traditional monarchy in the contemporary state order. For example, the case of Buganda is at times presented as the "cultural" location of monarchy in contemporary Ugandan statehood, but what the "cultural" model consists of is unclear to him. He argues that, sooner or later, the monarch would become his subjects' political leader in any case.

Traditional institutions are also seen at times as part of civil society. According to Appiah, a civil society is the "public life outside the state, away from formal political institutions, and apart from the economy. It is families, churches, temples and mosques, non-governmental organizations, football clubs, and the like."[10] He is aware of the debatable nature of this definition and thinks that traditional political institutions, given the aims for which they were formed and function, and also on account of their present, varied and, at times, very

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[8] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," *Explorations in African Political Thought: Identity, Community, Ethics*, ed. T. Kiros (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 45-53 at p. 50.

[9] On the subject of the meaning of the idea of dignity for the Ashanti, see Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 265. About equal dignity in the liberal system, see Appiah, "The limits of being liberal," *Philosophia Africana*, 2 (2005), 93-7 at p. 97.

[10] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 47.

extensive competencies, which are often guaranteed by the legal order of the contemporary state, must still be viewed in terms of their placement in the state's political environment. It would thus be difficult to see them simply as part of civil society.

Appiah also rejects the significance of the economic role of traditional political institutions. In his view, they are not private economic players, even when they abuse their position, as in the context of land distribution rights guaranteed by the legal order of the contemporary state, for instance.

He also does not agree to view traditional political institutions simply as local representatives of state authority, even in connection with their management over some forms of ownership.

In contrast, he thinks it is clear what, in contemporary times, the Ashanti's traditional monarchy is *not*: it is neither a museum of cultural heritage, nor a civil society, nor an economy, nor a state. This does not in the least mean that traditional institutions do not share certain traits with these domains. For example, the popularity of the monarchy among the Ashanti constitutes a political force, which is symptomatic of a state. The subjects' voluntary support for the monarchy has the traits of a civil society philosophy. Land management, in turn, has an economic dimension. Traditional monarchy could therefore be seen as a hybrid institution of sorts, but Appiah does not do so view it.

On the other hand, he is positively inclined to the proposals of the Cameroonian thinker Ajume Wingo, who sees traditional institutions in the role of "theatres of civic pedagogy," i.e., centres in which people are instilled with certain norms defined as "civic."[11] This educational model is associated with the raising of public funds by traditional monarchs (such as the *asantehene* or *kabaka*) for, among other things, education and health care. But Appiah considers that the role of traditional political authority in the contemporary African state extends much further.

In demonstration, it is necessary to look at traditional authority's sources of legitimacy. The first source could be referred to as religious, as it involves

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[11] See Ajume H. Wingo, "Fellowship associations as a foundation for liberal democracy in Africa," *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. K. Wiredu (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 450-459; Ajume H. Wingo, "Good government is accountability," *Explorations in African Political Thought*, ed. Kiros, pp. 151-170; Ajume H. Wingo, "Living legitimacy: a new approach to good government in Africa," *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 2 (2001), 49-70.

the ruler's role as an intermediary between the world of the ancestors and the world of the living. Appiah treats this role with a dose of scepticism while simultaneously admitting that "the spirits of the royal ancestors continue to be thought of as capable of producing effects."[12]

A more important source, according to Appiah, is universal recognition that customary norms and procedures are still binding in our times. This is the symbolic source of legitimacy for traditional authority. In other words, the power of traditional authority acts as a symbol, a carrier of tradition. Appiah believes that the logic of traditional methods of ruling is far more palpable for the Ashanti, for example, than the logic and actions of contemporary state authorities. To be appointed in keeping with procedures that have a long tradition is highly significant for the Ashanti. Michał Tymowski writes, on the gradual acquisition of legitimacy by a given dynasty, that in African conditions it was believed that the "ancestors' virtues were passed on to descendants, and that an accumulation of the qualities needed for praiseworthy ruling took place."[13] Thus the monarch and chiefs are highly respected by the Ashanti and, according to Appiah, this respect is not instrumentally grounded. He is convinced that neither the subjects' fear of traditional authority nor their economic dependence on it, have any significance in terms of its continued existence.

The state source of legitimacy for traditional authority lies in its recognition by the state. Ashanti procedures for choosing chiefs are regulated by state law and are subject to review in the public courts. It is worth repeating that these chiefs also have prerogatives guaranteed by the state in the sphere of land management on the territory under their rule. These prerogatives, as Appiah emphasizes, were maintained by the colonial authorities and then by the military and civilian governments of the post-colonial era. Monarchy is thus legitimized by both tradition and the state.

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[12] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 47.

[13] Michał Tymowski, *The Origins and Structures of Political Institutions in Pre-Colonial Black Africa: Dynastic Monarchy, Taxes and Tributes, War and Slavery, Kinship and Territory* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), pp. 70-1.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE
OF THE MONARCHY AND ITS SUBJECTS' IDENTITY AND SENSE
OF SELF-RESPECT

In the debate about the role of traditional authority and the sources of its legitimacy in contemporary times, Appiah considers that a benefit of fundamental significance – in terms of liberal theory, as well – is often overlooked: the sense of self-respect[14] which the subjects derive from the monarch's rule.

A sense of self-respect is closely associated with the idea of identity, which, as Appiah points out, involves "such features of people as their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, or sexuality."[15] These social traits have a strong influence on an individual's identity. The individual dimension of identity is thus constituted in part by its collective dimension. Identity is one of the most important themes in Appiah's works, and he writes that today practically every African of reflective disposition faces the problem of identity, and adds that "a great deal of ethical and political weight is borne by [the] many identities – ethnic, national, racial, and continental – in the life of modern Africa."[16]

On the subject of identity, Appiah refers to the labelling theory,[17] and claims that the actions of individuals are conceptually shaped by the labels given them by other people. These labels play a role in forming identity, as they are connected with assignment to a certain group and, thus, with expectations of behaviour specific to it. Labels thus have their origin in the culture in which the individual functions and are tied to the norms and patterns proper to that culture. Appiah writes that "once labels are applied to people, ideas about people who fit the label come to have social and psychological effects.

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[14] Appiah emphasizes that treating the sense of self-respect as a significant good is clearly noticeable in liberal theory since Rawls' time. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), § 67, p. 440 ff. (where self-respect is defined as most important primary good).

[15] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 50.

[16] Appiah, "African philosophy and African literature," *A Companion to African Philosophy*, ed. Wiredu, pp. 538-48 at p. 538.

[17] The author of labeling theory – used today mainly in psychology, psychiatry and criminology – is sociologist Howard Saul Becker. See his *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press, 1963 or its later editions). Appiah is most probably thinking of some modified version of the said theory.

In particular, these ideas shape the ways people conceive of themselves and their projects."[18] People shape their concepts of good living by reference to available labels. Appiah argues that an Ashanti, in the process of "identification," shapes his or her "life by the thought that something is an appropriate aim or an appropriate way of acting for an Asante."[19]

For Appiah, the fact that someone is an Ashanti means that he has inherited the Ashanti tradition, not that he chose it. Choice plays a role within the framework of a given convention, such as in the choice of a profession,[20] whereas race or ethnicity is a part of an individual's identity over which he has

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[18] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 52.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] As in the example of the French waiter, whose example Appiah mentions after Ian Hacking ("Making up people," *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy*, ed. E. Stein (New York: Garland, 1990), pp. 69-88 at pp. 81-4). Hacking borrows the figure of the waiter from Sartre (for more on the subject, see Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Etre et le Néant* [Paris: Gallimard, 1976], esp. pp. 95-6). Appiah points out that the waiter plays the role his clients expect him to play (in the original [*ibid.*, p. 95] Sartre writes: "Il joue, il s'amuse [...] il joue à être garçon de café", and further on "le garçon de café joue avec sa condition pour la réaliser"). Appiah writes that "the idea of the garçon de café lacks the sort of theoretical commitments that are trailed by many of our social identities: black and white, gay and straight, man and woman" (Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 51) and adds that the waiter possesses a recognizable identity. The waiter's clients expect him to play out his assigned role correctly, however. Therefore, the waiter is to adapt to his clients' expectations. With an ethnic identity, people's expectations are not associated with the imagery that, for example, the Ashanti play roles of some sort. In the situation of the waiter, the convention of his behavior is of key importance in connection with his role. In the case of the Ashanti identity, in addition to the convention, there is the fact that they are the heirs to a tradition, something that is not a matter of free choice. While the person who is to become a waiter may decide whether to play the role fitting within the framework of a convention or not, i.e., to take on the given identity or to reject it, having an ethnic identity is not a question of the will of any Ashanti. To illustrate this, one can take the example of a Ashanti waiter: during his work at the café, he has to play a certain role and behave in a manner fitting for a waiter; if he were to not to behave in keeping with the rules of being a waiter, he won't get tips or may be dismissed; after work, the same Ashanti no longer has anything in common with the assigned role of a waiter (in the original [*ibid.*, p. 96] Sartre writes: "c'est précisément ce sujet que j'ai à être et que je ne suis point" and further "je ne puis que jouer à l'être, c'est-à-dire m'imaginer que je le suis.").

no influence.[21] Thus, identifying with the culture and tradition of the Ashanti, i.e., thinking of oneself as an Ashanti and acting in accordance with behavioural conventions that are typical for the Ashanti, is not solely a matter of will.

Appiah considers that the collective dimension of an individual's identity lies at the base of his sense of pride or shame at being a member of the Ashanti people. He writes: "when I think of myself as an Asante, I can find myself proud of the collective achievements or the symbolic resources of Asanteman – the people of Asante – and I can also participate in a similar way in the achievements of particular other Asante people (as when a soccer player from Kumasi does well in the World Cup)."[22] He claims that this symbolic participation is, for many individuals, one of the bases of their sense of self-respect. Appiah sees indigenous traditional political institutions as superstructures of Ashanti identity. The dismantling of the monarchy, in depriving the Ashanti of such an important element of their identity, would thus deprive them of part of their sense of self-respect. And this would constitute, according to Appiah, disregard of a key liberal value.

Appiah's final observation is quite surprising. He thinks that in a situation in which it could be said that "attaching oneself to an institution that offends liberal principles, and basing one's self-respect in part on its achievements, reflects an illiberal psychology,"[23] the liberal-minded community member should set about convincing other members of the community that there is no longer a need to seek a basis for self-respect in the monarchy. He sees no threat currently to the continued existence of monarchy, and he believes that his own defence of it is not in contradiction with the hope that its importance will eventually wane – as the needs it now fulfils are met by the institutions of an increasingly democratic Ghana.[24]

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[21] Appiah expounds on this theme after Sartre, Ian Hacking and Elizabeth Anscombe in *The Ethics of Identity*, pp. 65-70.

[22] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 53.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Only two countries de facto benefited from the wave of democratization which took place in Africa south of the Sahara during the period of decolonization: Botswana and Mauritius. It is estimated that following the wave of democratization of Sub-Saharan Africa after 1989, only 6 countries embarked on the path of real structural democratization: Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, South Africa. (See Charles Tilly, *Democracy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], pp. 43-4.

QUESTIONS

Appiah's argument that the basic source of traditional monarchy's legitimacy in contemporary Africa is the sense of self-respect that royal authority provides for its subjects is unconvincing. Appiah mentions two traditional monarchies of Sub-Saharan Africa (the monarchies of the Ashanti and of the Buganda)[25] but he expounds his idea using the first example only. It is probable that his analysis of the Ashanti monarchy's sources of legitimacy reflects the true state of affairs. It is difficult, however, to accept that his observations concern all of the Ashanti under the rule of King Nana Osei Tutu II, and to apply his conclusions, if only *mutatis mutandis*, to the many other traditional monarchies still functioning in various African countries.[26] Reality seems more complex. There can be several simultaneous sources of legitimacy, and in the case of specific peoples which are, even in part, subject to the rule of a local monarch, the importance of specific sources of legitimacy could differ. The sources of legitimacy for traditional rulers could also vary depending on which social groups (of education or status) of various peoples are considered. In fairness, it should be said that Appiah emphasizes that symbolic and state sources of legitimacy also play a role in the case of the Ashanti monarchy, although they are of significantly lesser importance than the sense of self-respect. While he mentions the existence of other sources, he does not develop this aspect of the question.

My main objection to Appiah's thesis is that he seems to act on the *a priori* conviction that the existence of local traditional African rule can and should be reconciled with liberal democratic theories about society in a contemporary state. The crux of the question is what liberal foothold traditional authority could possess in the contemporary republican context. The legitimacy of this rule is not, obviously, connected with an election, as is the case in liberal democracies.[27] It is worth repeating that although Appiah points to

Tilly relies on the analyses of Freedom House). Of those, as many as 5 are located in West Africa. A country that has particular chances of building a lasting democracy is Ghana.

[25] In a context that is not significant for the purpose of this article, Appiah also refers to the Suazi Kingdom.

[26] To mention only Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia.

[27] See Beetham, "Political Legitimacy," esp. pp. 113-4, and, Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991).

several possible sources of legitimacy, he ignores them to present us with a theory that fits his assumption; he identifies self-respect as a source. It is a source which is usually overlooked or to which little weight is given. As Appiah argues, it is possible to reconcile it with the liberal democratic theory because it is not offensive to liberals and may even appeal to them.

It would be difficult to claim that Appiah is projecting his views onto the Ashanti, as he is himself a heritor of their culture.[28] For this same reason, he has a unique opportunity to understand the Ashanti worldview, Ashanti ways of thinking and feeling, and, above all, to explain their underpinnings to us. Yet it should be remembered that Appiah has spent most of his life in the West: in the United States and in Great Britain, where he was born of a British mother. He was also educated in the West, which has shaped his liberal views. As David E. McClean says, Appiah possesses "a valuable multi-cultural personal history;"[29] and although I do not claim that Appiah ascribes his own convictions to the Ashanti, he may be seeing in their culture what he wishes to find there. He may analyze and describe the culture he studies in an opaque manner. In this context, it is worth recalling Appiah's own view that "a theory can be close to the truth in some respects and far from it in others."[30]

THE SUBJECTS' FEAR AND DEPENDENCE

Lipset indicates that legitimacy "may be associated with many forms of political organization, including oppressive ones" and adds that "feudal societies, before the advent of industrialism, undoubtedly enjoyed the basic loyalty of most of their members."[31] I make no claim that the Ashanti's system of rule is oppressive by nature or that such unambiguous notions as "fright" or

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[28] For more on the subject, see Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. viii ff.

[29] David E. McClean, "Kwame Anthony Appiah: The Ethics of Identity," *Philosophia Africana*, 2 (2006), 133-9 at p. 133.

[30] Appiah, "Akan and Euro-American Concepts of the Person," *African Philosophy: New and Traditional Perspectives*, ed. L. M. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 21-34 at p. 23 and, more in depth, pp. 24-5.

[31] Lipset, *Political Man*, p. 64. About the legitimacy of traditional and theocratic authority; fascist and communist authority; as well as military dictatorship see Beetham, "Political Legitimacy," p. 111 ff.

"enslavement" could be used in connection with contemporary relations between the authorities and the subjects. It should be noted, however, that Appiah rejects two important sources of legitimacy for traditional authority, and especially that part of the notion of legitimacy that is connected with obedience. These sources are fear and dependence.[32] Fear and dependence, which are indefensible from a liberal standpoint, can be linked to both a religious and a state source of legitimacy.

Appiah mentions that certain people may believe in the power of royal ancestral spirits, while he simultaneously marginalizes the importance of such beliefs. However, the religious source of legitimacy for traditional authority remains very strong in many African countries. This source of legitimacy is most certainly based on fear to a significant degree, because of the subjects' conviction that the ruler is almost divine in character, that he has certain supernatural attributes and that he can significantly affect their destiny. Maintaining this conviction among the subjects has traditionally been accomplished by means of various ceremonies of an at least partially religious nature, celebrated by the rulers or in their presence, and involving – as Appiah describes it – various paraphernalia.

Appiah is conscious both of the importance of royal festivities among the Ashanti and of the entire symbolism connected with the person of the ruler. For example, he writes that "the Asante monarchy is not just a quaint leftover of past glories: the symbolism of Asante monarchy, the paraphernalia that surround the Golden Stool, are potent because they engage with norms and ideals that are real and powerfully relevant today."[33] However, he links these elements only with the symbolic source of legitimacy, which refers to the past. It is not so easy to separate the ruling tradition from the religious belief and the entire sphere of spirituality, however. Traditional rulers are very often perceived by their subjects as being in contact with supernatural beings and with the ancestors. I am convinced that many elements of monarchic symbolism reflect the superhuman nature of the ruler and facilitate the manipulation

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[32] Although it seems that legitimate authority is associated with the voluntary consent of the ruled, this does not in the least mean that this is always the case and that this voluntarism is absolute in character. See C.K. Ansell, "Legitimacy: political," *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Smelser and Baltes, Vol. 13, pp. 8704-6 at p. 8706, where the author mentioned the political philosophers' fear that "power may be regarded as legitimate because it is powerful."

[33] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 46.

of his subjects.[34] This has been, in large measure, their traditional significance and such is the role they continue to play in the African provinces, though certainly to a lesser degree and with regard to a smaller portion of subjects than previously. It is worth repeating that many subjects of African rulers continue to believe in the magic force of their monarchs or chiefs. Although traditional rulers today seem not to have the power to deprive a person of life, they often rely on magicians and maintain among their subjects the belief in magic and the importance of spells. Traditional beliefs often serve as a contemporary ideology of power. It is not rare for subjects to fear that if they fail to obey the monarch, they will meet with some misfortune. Rulers have traditionally used religion and other beliefs to make others dependent and to pursue their aims or interests. Subjects' fear of ostracism from other members of the community also seems significant. Monarchic functionaries may propose applying some form of exclusion with regard to those subjects who fail to show respect, obedience or loyalty to the monarch.[35]

The subordination of subjects and the strengthening of the monarch's rule that this entails has always gone hand in hand with granting some of them privileges and with the monarch's traditional and economic functions. Certain monarchs continue to bestow on their subjects prestigious titles (what could be called noble or professional titles). A title bestowed by the monarch can bring significant influence and status in the local community.

On account of tradition or state recognition, local rulers also play a role in the resolution of local disputes, including matters of family, matrimony, inheritance and child-rearing, and may act as the local public authority in the name of the state, usually at its lowest level. Traditional rulers continue to perform various ceremonies and to cultivate local holidays.

In many parts of Africa today, the economic power of the monarch, including that of the Ashanti's monarch, is subordinated to the state law. Tradi-

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[34] Often the ruler has an intermediary in his contacts with the people, he didn't walk on the ground and didn't sit on it, but rather on a sort of stool-throne, and example of which is the Ashanti's Golden Stool mentioned by Appiah. For more on the subject, see Tymowski, *The Origins and Structures of Political Institutions in Pre-Colonial Black Africa*, pp. 49-51.

[35] See Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. xvi, where Appiah makes the following statement: "loyalties and local allegiances determine more than what we want; they determine who we are".

tional monarchs may possess land or hold the right to its distribution.[36] In the provinces, land often possesses a sacral significance and remains the nominal property of the whole community, i.e., the living, the ancestors and those who have yet to be born. Even if he has no title to the land, a ruler may manage its resources in the name of the community.

The functions of land steward, arbitrator, and local representative of the state authorities may be, and undoubtedly often are, very useful in the community's day-to-day life. Often, the ruler has a very good understanding of his subjects' problems and needs. Nonetheless, these functions are also connected with a degree of control exercised by the ruler over the life of his subjects. The ruler's decisions and desires are often very important to his subjects and this situation has a real influence on their lasting dependence. A ruler's favourable or unfavourable decision in matters of individual importance for subjects will in large measure depend on the degree of submission and respect they have shown him. Subjects who are dependent on their ruler and who fear his negative decisions are less likely to oppose those of his decisions that would run counter to their interests, and thus additionally reinforce his position. Today, a ruler does not need to resort to force to keep his subjects in a position of dependence; the dependence itself and fear of the ruler's reaction are often enough. Should the majesty of the monarch's power fail to quash any opposition to his actions, the verbal reaction of his functionaries usually suffices. The spoken word has always been an important means of traditional authority. In earlier times as well, monarchs often had no need to resort to force to realize their aims or interests, though usually both tools were part of a ruler's instruments of pressure.

THE INTEREST OF THE RULER AND HIS SUBJECTS' NEEDS AND BENEFIT

Of course, it cannot be claimed that relations between rulers and subjects have been based solely on fear and dependence, but Appiah entirely disregards the significance of these factors. He also omits to raise the issue of the ruler's interest in the continued existence of the monarchy. It is natural that, in

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[36] Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 159.

considering the matter of the role of traditional authority in the contemporary African state, the question arises about the advantages that the ruler derives from the continued existence of his office. In terms of Appiah's attempt to reconcile the existence of traditional authority with contemporary statehood as seen through the prism of liberal theory, this question may seem inconvenient: The ruler derives various, primarily economic, benefits from the position he holds, if only as a result of the fees he collects for the resolution of disputes or the lease of land. Many traditional rulers in Africa receive a subsidy, or even a salary, from the state. Various types of dues or tributes that the ruler collects from his subjects (for instance, on traditional holidays) are costs that they incur for the existence of the monarchy.

Although the profits of today's rulers are usually more modest than those of past monarchs, who wielded real state authority, these profits have been in many cases guaranteed first by the colonial rulers and then by the independent state's authorities, which often cede a portion of their competencies as well. As in colonial times, the practice continues because it is convenient for the central authorities, and in our day it is often connected with the fact that the central authorities are ineffective and fail to meet many of their obligations toward members of the state. Royal rule can and often does perform many positive functions for its subjects. But this does not negate the fact that the monarchy itself derives benefits from the situation. State recognition not only reinforces a monarchy economically but also gives it prestige in conditions where some of the subjects may have severed or may attempt to sever their dependence on the traditional authority. To return to the symbolism connected with the monarchy: the Golden Stool, the various paraphernalia, the palace, all of this makes a great impression on the subjects, who are often poor and uneducated, and is an additional element reinforcing the position of the ruler.[37] In conjunction with state recognition, the symbolism certainly facilitates manipulation of the subjects, and this manipulation may be necessary for the traditional authority's continued existence.

Of course, the ruler's intentions need not be connected solely with his own interests and those of his lineage. He may act out of a sense of obligation or mission. Although in many cases religion continues to be part of the

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[37] Cf. Tymowski, *The Origins and Structures of Political Institutions in Pre-Colonial Black Africa*, pp. 54-62.

traditional ruler's functions and the ruler can manipulate those of his subjects who believe in magic, he himself may be limited by fear of the reaction of the ancestors should he violate specific traditional principles of wielding power in the interest of the community. The ruler, after all, is part of the traditional community structure and traditionally has to take the views of the council of elders and the interests of his subjects into account to a significant degree,[38] especially today, when the possibility of rejecting and breaking the state of dependence on the ruler is a much easier step than was once the case.[39] So it cannot be said that there are no limits to the ruler's authority. The ruler upholds traditional rights and values and, in fulfilling his obligations, he may act for the good of his subjects.

Another issue, which Appiah mentions only in passing, concerns the benefit that subjects may derive from the continued existence of traditional authority. In a situation where the central authorities fail to perform their functions or where they fulfil them to an unsatisfactory degree, the local ruler may have a very important role to play. Firstly, it should be mentioned that the contemporary state is a secondary entity in relation to traditional authority, which has existed for much longer. Moreover, the contemporary African state is perceived, at least by part of its nominal members, as an entity which, even if not entirely foreign, is of an external character. Traditional authority, even if it is not always respected or is viewed by part of the emancipated and educated members of the state as being archaic, is yet a familiar and home-grown institution – which is significant, especially for those persons whose social consciousness is concentrated solely on their own community. For many Africans, the state is an abstraction, if only in the sense that its actions are not recognizable or associated with anything positive at the local level. I have already mentioned that although the monarchy is not a state it often performs certain functions that should be performed by state institutions. Appiah mentions that the ruler can gather the means for public aims, such as education or health care.[40] Significantly, he also says that by doing so, the monarch may "express the value of the ends (and of social mobilization toward those ends)

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 75-7.

[39] On the subject of the changes which have taken place in the life of the Ashanti over the past decades, see for example Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 103-4.

[40] See also Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 170, where the author also writes about how local rulers organize local road conservation efforts.

and, at the same time, contribute to their achievement."[41] This may indeed be the case; education, whether in regards to health, religion, or instilling community values, is certainly important.

It is difficult to imagine, however, how traditional rulers would go about replacing state institutions in the sphere of universal education, as has often been done by missionaries.[42] It is also difficult to see what benefit the rulers would derive from educating persons other than their own offspring or monarchic functionaries. What benefits could a ruler expect to obtain from expending funds on education, which could one day turn against them, just as the formation of cadres by the colonial authorities had a detrimental effect on colonial dependence? The educational function of the monarchy does not seem convincing in this context. Nonetheless, it is possible to imagine the positive use of the ruler's prestige in, for example, the dissemination by state or non-government institutions of knowledge leading to the prevention of certain diseases.

Traditional authority need not have anything in common with health care or universal education, however. The authority of the monarch as an extension of sorts of public authority at the local level can play an important role in, for example, the realization of local investment projects, as is the case in Cameroon.[43] The local ruler often understands his subjects' needs better than do the representatives of the central authorities.

The traditional ruler seems to play a more frequent and more significant role in the resolution of disputes and the administration of justice. Thus far, I have looked at these functions of traditional authority from the perspective of the subjects' dependence on the decisions of the ruler-arbitrator. They also need to be examined from a different perspective. Suppose the state system for the administration of justice is deficient or that certain members of the state have no access to it. Or imagine a situation in which the norms of state law have not been internalized by a given community. The members of this community do not wish to resolve their differences according to outside norms

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[41] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 46.

[42] About Appiah's views of the positive role of the Church in Ghana, especially in education, health care and social assistance, see his *In My Father's House*, pp. 169-70.

[43] See Ryszard Vorbrich, "Trybalizm a wieloetniczne państwo afrykańskie" [Tribalism and the African multi-ethnic state], *Sprawy Narodowościowe. Seria nowa*, 14-5 (1999), 183-192 at p. 189.

because, for example, they may differ significantly from the principles that have guided the community since time immemorial. Or perhaps the state norms may be unknown to the people, incomprehensible or simply not accepted.[44] Traditional justice is often conciliatory in character and the parties abide by certain principles. The monarch, or the functionary who performs legal services in his name, has the knowledge necessary to adjudicate contentious issues. The ruler also has the prestige connected with the role of arbitrator. Both parties to a conflict, at least prior to the judgment, agree for it to be heard in keeping with traditional methods. Both parties recognize the verdict (at least they are expected to do so). It also happens that when the traditional ruler proves unable to resolve a given dispute, its parties meet in a public court. In such a situation, the judge may ask the ruler for his opinion and for an account of the attempts already made to resolve the matter amicably.

Traditional authority may, therefore, fill gaps where the state's institutions seem ineffective or play a complementary role to that of the state, bringing benefits to members of the state, who are also its subjects. Thus it may be said that a very important source of legitimacy for traditional authority is the subjects' needs and benefit.[45] Appiah treats this dimension of legitimacy as a marginal issue, yet it is important in terms of his liberal argumentation as well. There need be no contradiction between advantages for the ruler and advantages for his subjects; a situation could exist from which both the ruler and his subjects benefit.

But overall, the advantages from the continued existence of traditional monarchy are greater for the ruler. If the present functions of the ruler were to be taken over in the future by effective state institutions acting for the benefit of the citizens, then the economic advantages of the ruler and his prestige would be significantly reduced, while today's subjects of the monarch and members of the state – future citizens – would gain and, at the very least, their fear of the ruler's reaction would be much diminished, as would their dependence on him.

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[44] See Appiah, *In My Father's House*, pp. 169 and 208.

[45] Cf. Donald A. Watt, "Legitimacy," *International Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, ed. F. N. Magill (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1996), Vol. 1, pp. 760-763 at p. 761, where the author states that some theoreticians think that "a governmental system is legitimate only if it is able to meet the needs of its citizens in the areas of social and economic welfare." Also see ibid., p. 763.

If the functioning of a traditional monarchy holds significant advantages for its subjects, Appiah has an additional argument in support of his thesis that the system is beneficial and that its continued existence should be supported. But let's return for a moment to the issue of the symbolic source of legitimacy. Appiah admits that it is of some importance in our time. He correctly points out that many Ashanti understand the logic of customary governing methods, just as they comprehend traditional values and norms. Authority is thus exercised in keeping with rules rooted in tradition – it is a symbol in itself. Indeed, the ruler is often respected from the outset on account of tradition and his position. It is worth pointing out, however, that this tradition is defined by the monarchic lineage; it is the ruler who is the transmitter of tradition and, in the group of his closest family members, his collaborators and the elders, he decides on any corrections to be brought to the traditional solutions. A cunning and covetous ruler can thus use his position to manipulate his subjects in such a way as to maximize benefits to himself.

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY AND THE SUBJECTS' SENSE OF SELF-RESPECT

On matters connected with identity as a source of legitimacy and as a basic advantage that subjects derive from the existence of the monarchy, Appiah advances a bold thesis: that traditional authority contributes to engendering a sense of self-respect among its subjects and that the monarchy is a source of pride for them.

I think that royal authority is most certainly a contributing factor in shaping a portion of identity among peoples. In African conditions, it is often difficult to speak of a state identity among members of the same state. The force of ethnic identity is mentioned more often. This is most probably the basic identity for most Africans. It is understandable that for many people, especially for those who do not live in big cities, traditional authority is one of the elements of their identity. But is it a fundamental or unusually important one? It is difficult to conclude to what degree traditional authority is a constitutive and supportive element of the Ashanti identity. Appiah himself writes in one of his works that "preserving *culture* – in the sense of cultural artifacts, broadly conceived – is different from preserving *cultures*"... "cultures are made of continuities *and*

changes, and the identity of a society can survive through these changes."[46] Is the identity of peoples who used to have their own ruler, but who no longer do, in some manner poorer than the identity of the Ashanti or of other peoples among whom traditional authority has managed to survive?[47] After all, adhesion to any tradition can reinforce one's sense of self-respect. What is the particular characteristic of the Ashanti monarchy that contributes to producing a sense of self-respect among its subjects? Does it have a specific element that affects a considerable portion of the Ashanti so positively? The ruler is part of tradition, but tradition is subject to change. Usually, at a certain point in history, traditional authority ceases to exist. Among the Ashanti, the monarchy has for some reason been preserved and survived. Appiah claims that the monarchy is very important to the Ashanti. Doubtless it is, but is its continued existence due to the fact that it reinforces their sense of self-respect?

Or has it survived and, perhaps, reinforces the subjects' sense of self-respect because, for example, it is needed, because it performs some of its functions with regard to the subjects adequately, or has certain traits that the subjects like? Perhaps the monarchies of the Ashanti, the Baganda or others in Africa, exist today because their traditional rulers act in the interest of their subjects (which may incidentally be convenient for the state authorities as well). Subjects may feel proud of a ruler who is, in their view, a good monarch and who truly works in their interest. But Appiah doesn't tell us about the qualities of the Ashanti's present ruler or about his predecessors. He doesn't present their accomplishments, their characters or attitudes. Pride may be felt in the achievements, actions, or behaviour of the members of a given community, as Appiah himself writes in connection with the Kumasi footballer who is going from success to success in the World Cup; it may also be derived from the collective accomplishments of a community. The situation is similar in the case of shame, which may be felt in connection with the attitudes or actions of an individual or the entire community. Appiah does not explain, however, what is the specific relation between the existence of traditional authority and the subjects' sense of pride or shame.

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[46] Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 105-6 and 107.

[47] This is a question that could just as easily be asked of members of many societies beyond Sub-Saharan Africa, where the state system was transformed over the last few decades from a monarchy to a republic.

It is perfectly comprehensible, for example, that an Ashanti may derive his sense of self-respect from the mere fact of belonging to the people of the Ashanti, but it is more difficult to understand the he should derive this sense from the very existence of traditional authority. Appiah does not seem to attach much importance to the fact that identity takes shape in opposition – us versus them.[48] The identity of a given community is connected with its members' consciousness of being in possession of specific and distinct traits. If Appiah were to argue that the Ashanti have an extended sense of self-respect because, in contrast to many other peoples, they have a traditional monarch, it would certainly be easier to understand the position of the monarchy in connection with the identity of the Ashanti. But he does not draw such a conclusion.

Perhaps the monarch provides a sense of security to a part of his subjects, especially as the worldview of older or uneducated persons is strongly shaped by local tradition, of which the ruler is a part. For them, the monarch could be the main point of reference. The ruler is associated by many Ashanti with their rich culture and past, all of which doubtless affects their sense of self-respect. But the manner of exercising authority, the actions and the character of the monarch should play a fundamental role in this connection. Appiah does not tell us what shapes the image of traditional authority among the Ashanti. It can't be solely the tradition of the monarchy, the solemn holidays (including, for example, the enthronement of the ruler) or the comprehensibleness of monarchic ruling. He omits the significance of religion, of the ancestors and spells. Perhaps, they are inconvenient in terms of a liberal attempt to justify the continued existence of the monarchy.

Appiah paints a picture of collective contentment with the traditional authority. This picture seems to indicate that every "real" Ashanti respects the ruler and views the existence of the monarchy as being natural. Appiah has nothing to say about those who do not submit to the monarch's rule or who

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[48] He does write on the subject in one of his works, recalling the research of Frederik Barth. See Appiah, "Ethnicity and identity in Africa: an interpretation," *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, 2nd edn, eds. Appiah, Henry Louis Gates Jr., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Vol. 2, pp. 568-71 at p. 571. See also Appiah, *In My Father's House*, p. 178, and also p. 160 (where the author writes about the national consciousness of the Ghanaian which was shaped in opposition to the British during the period when Ghana was gaining its independence).

break their ties of dependence on the monarch. The point is not solely that some Ashanti migrate to the capital or to other regions of Ghana and that their ties with traditional authority are naturally weakened as a result. There must also be those who remain in the Ashanti kingdom but choose not to have any relations with the monarchy, if only because they have no need for it and are not in the least dependent on it. Appiah tries to reconcile the idea of traditional authority with liberalism, but he does not discuss the attitude of the ruler, his court or other Ashanti persons to such individuals. Does rejection of the monarchy entail any costs? Someone who decides to break his dependence on the ruler may no longer need the advantages inherent from submission to him, but does this lead to some form of ostracism, to be being labelled a rebel, or other unpleasantness in the community? Appiah's theory would be considerably more convincing if he were to show that breaking the ties of dependence on the monarchy does not entail costly consequences for the "republican." Appiah does not do this, although in one of his works he shows how attached he is to the idea of protecting the individual by asking the reader what is "truly important – cultures or people?" To this question, he gives the following answer: "in my opinion, the foundation of the appropriate model should be the recognition of individuals – not of nations, tribes or "peoples" – as the basic subject of moral concern."[49]

IN APPIAH'S DEFENCE

Having first argued for the consistency of monarchy with contemporary statehood and liberal theory, Appiah ultimately reveals far-reaching doubts about whether his defence of traditional monarchy accords with his hope that the subjects' needs will eventually be met instead by the state institutions.[50]

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[49] Appiah, "Pochwała kosmopolityzmu: pożytki z mieszania się kultur" [In Praise of Cosmopolitism: The Benefits of Cultural Inter-Mixing], *Europa*, 32 (2006), 8-10 at p. 8.

[50] An analogous situation takes place in another of Appiah's works. See his "Akan and Euro-American Concepts of the Person," esp. pp. 28, 33) where the author first defends the Ashanti concept of the person (in keeping with which the individual is formed of the body – nipadua, the individual spirit-vehicle of personality – sunsum, and of a peculiar force vitale - okra), which varies greatly from the Western scientific

This is a significant turn: his earlier argument was that traditional authority is beneficial for the Ashanti. In the end, it becomes clear that he hopes that the Ashanti will not in the future derive their sense of self-respect from the existence of the monarchy but, as citizens of Ghana, will view their state as the principal point of reference in terms of their identity. Appiah would like his two lines of reasoning, which are seemingly so distinct, to be compatible; his hesitations are perfectly illustrated by the following words from one of his works: "how can we reconcile a respect for people as they are with a concern for people as they might be?"[51]

I would like to act as Appiah's advocate for a moment and try to demonstrate the possibility of coherence in the matter. As we have seen above, Appiah has encountered two realities: one traditional and one modern. He understands both but sees the future, which he clearly considers preferable, in the modern reality. He thinks that there should be a democratic state order in Ghana and that the Ghanaians should feel true membership in their state. It seems that such a stance need not be in opposition to the continued existence of the monarchy. Appiah would perhaps be satisfied with the British model, for example, where the monarchy most certainly does not fulfil all the needs of the citizens in connection with their sense of self-respect, yet it lasts and constitutes a certain continuity of tradition and an element of the national heritage. Appiah does not mention anything leading one to believe that he thinks the Ashanti's monarchy should ever cease to exist. In liberal terms it would perhaps be possible to defend the monarchy as a theatre of civic life, as Appiah mentions in reference to the thought of Ajume Wingo. The monarchy itself is not an obstacle to either thinker's liberal view of the contemporary state. The citizens of Ghana of the Ashanti people could remain the subjects of their king, just as the citizens of Great Britain are the subjects of their monarch. It could even be claimed that, formally speaking, the future position of the Ashanti in their democratic state could be preferable to that of the British

concept of the person (which, the author writes, is made of body and mind), in order to state in the conclusion that, in truth, the rejection of the Ashanti concept is greatly premature but most certainly in the future the Ashanti will give up their belief in the sunsum. At the same time, Appiah emphasizes that for a long time, the Ashanti concept of person functioned successfully as an auxiliary element in managing social relations and, in that respect, its role should be recognized.

[51] Appiah, "Ethnic identity as a political resource," p. 189.

in their country. After all, some Ashanti may cease to be the subjects of their ruler because he is a local monarch, whereas the British, as citizens of the United Kingdom, will remain, *nolens volens*, the subjects of their queen (or king). In other words, theoretically at least, the Ashanti could have a greater possibility to choose.

This, however, is not the point of my argument on Appiah's behalf. Appiah's defence of the monarchy and his belief in the compatibility of this position with his hope for the emergence among the Ashanti of a fundamental, identifying tie with republican and civic Ghana could perhaps be explained in a more subtle manner. Perhaps Appiah is presenting us with the evolutionary approach.[52] Namely, there are various stages of development and, at present, traditional authority is useful and important, as has been the case in other cultures or states at different stages of their development. The idea that, at certain stages, monarchy is useful as a sort of organism ordering political and social life is borne out by history. Perhaps at the current, preliminary stage of development of the civic body in Ghana, there truly is a need for a strong attachment to traditional authority, and should this be the case, it would be natural for the Ashanti to seek support in the monarchy. Monarchic power is not omnipotent, as used to be the case, and yet it plays an important role in the life of the Ashanti, preventing a sudden break with the old order. Modernization is taking place, but the passage to modernity is occurring in a gentle fashion. The process of emerging from tradition and embarking on a new stage of development is, to use a term of some currency in recent Central-European history, a "velvety" one. Following such a line of reasoning, a certain coherence and not dissonance could be perceived in Appiah's views.

By adopting such a perspective, it would be possible to look at Appiah's argument about identity from a different angle. Identity can be formed in many ways; certain identities are based mainly on kinship or language, others on religion, while others rest on some other distinct central element. Perhaps, among the Ashanti, traditional authority is such a chief determinant of identity. Perhaps the monarchy gives its subjects a sense of self-respect by reinforcing their identity; this identity may be strengthened by the monarchic

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[52] Cf. Lipset, *Political Man*, p. 66, where the author concludes that "one main source of legitimacy lies in the continuity of important traditional integrative institutions during a transitional period in which new institutions are emerging."

symbols to which Appiah attaches such importance. (Of course, the existence of an identity detached from all symbolism can be imagined, but usually, for most people, symbols are significant.)[53] For the Ashanti, the symbolism of the monarchy is their own symbolism, to which they are accustomed. It may be easier to understand than the state symbolism, which they do not yet consider their own, with which they do not yet identify and which has no positive associations for them. On the other hand, the symbolism of the monarchy is potent and, as Appiah points out, is associated with certain traditions and ideals.

It is possible that a critical assessment of Appiah's reasoning merely betrays a lack of imagination. It can be assumed, after all, that Appiah's role is to lead us into the culture of the Ashanti. Appiah lives in the West and knows what language to use in speaking to Westerners. As an intermediary, he is trying to clarify something that we can't perceive or understand from our cultural viewpoint. Perhaps he wishes to tell us that people who don't have many other valuable points of cultural reference are truly strengthened by that part of their identity which is tied to the existence of traditional authority. At the same time, he believes that things will be better when this strengthening is supplied by the state and when people will identify with the civic state.[54] For as long as this is not the case, however, the monarchy has its role to play. Maybe this is Appiah's message for me, a doubter.

APPIAH UNDEFENDED

It is also possible that Appiah is not truly convinced that the monarchy should continue to exist in today's world, but, having undertaken its defence, his task is not to affect a change in the nature of the institution, or to diminish the monarchy's significance so it can be replaced by a new order. Rather,

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[53] See Appiah, "The limits of being liberal," at pp. 93-7, where the author returns to the issue of symbols in an entirely different context.

[54] Appiah stresses that the level of the Ashanti's identification with the countries they inhabit is still modest but, at the same time, he points to a typical example of its existence. See Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, p. 25, where the author writes: "When a Ghanaian team wins the African Cup of Nations in soccer that is of value to me by virtue of my identity as a Ghanaian."

he must try to explain what seems to be a certain archaic reality, and raise arguments for it. He may have a strong emotional connection with Ashanti culture, of which traditional authority is an integral element. His approach to Ashanti culture and to its monarchy is perfectly understandable if we take into account, for example, the explanations in a patriotic spirit of those elements of our own history that should justly make us ashamed.

To return, however, to Appiah's defence, it should be remembered that I may be trying to explain reasoning which Appiah bases on a false assumption – that the Ashanti derive their sense of self-respect from the existence of traditional authority. Such an approach seems very convenient because a sense of self-respect may be used to justify almost anything. It can be derived from various elements of culture or from the actions of community members that need not be at all praiseworthy. A sense of self-respect may be reinforced by membership in any group. It doesn't seem to me, however, that Appiah has demonstrated that it is precisely the existence of traditional authority that produces a sense of self-respect among the Ashanti or that the ruler is a source of pride for members of the community he heads. For many Ashanti, being a subject must be solely an occasional feeling, such as during the enthrone-ment ceremony for example, or during other holidays which, especially for youth, must be little more than a form of entertainment today. Appiah does not point to evidence. He wishes us to trust his word, but what if he wrongly assesses the manner in which the majority of the Ashanti view their monarchy and whether it is an unusually important or fundamental part of their identity?

Appiah's approach gives rise to yet another issue. Justifying the monarchy by pointing to its connection with the Ashanti's sense of self-respect could also serve to reinforce and petrify it, i.e., to preserve the status quo, as opposed to ushering in change and modernity. I don't know how Appiah assesses the Ashanti's present monarch and what other positive functions, besides the one related to identity, he performs with regard to his subjects.[55] I don't know how

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[55] Although Appiah does not provide this information, see the following articles and interviews in *West Africa*, 29th April – 5th May 2002, pp. 10-24: Osei Tutu II, Kojo Yankah, "Tradition in modern times;" Kwesi Yankah, "A traditional king in the 21st century;" Osei Kwadwo, "From Osei Tutu I to Osei Tutu II;" Ivor Agyeman-Duah, "The Golden Stool;" Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, "A modern king returns to an old con-cept;" and I.K. Gyasi, "An exemplary initiative in education." See also Alex B. Asie-du, Kwame A. Labi, and Brempong Osei-Tutu, "An Asanteman – World Bank heritage

the Ashanti ruler treats his subjects or what benefits he derives from being the ruler. Appiah's engagement in the defence of traditional authority could be viewed as a sort of intellectual legalization of the old state of affairs. Consider his defence from the perspective of the advantages derived by a ruler whose subjects' obedience is most certainly on the wane: if a scholar from a renowned university, originating from and raised in the tradition of the Ashanti and presently living in the United States claims that traditional authority is a significant good, this is first and foremost in the interest of the monarch himself, and not necessarily that of the Ashanti as a whole. This, I hope, is not the aim of Appiah's argument.

Appiah's thinking escapes simple classification and seems very personal. It is the voice of a liberal,[56] but one who originates in part from a traditional community and continues to be tied to it in some manner, if only emotionally. He values that community's heritage and seeks justification for a certain baggage of traits proper to traditional authority but deciphered from the liberal viewpoint simply as a group of archaic relics or drawbacks of a past era. Such a state of affairs is entirely understandable and analogies can be found in the Western world where, for example, many individuals feel ties to the Christian tradition, even though by now their worldview has little in common with Christianity.

There is also a problem with the fact that the Ashanti community is an exclusive community. It does not allow for the inclusion of others; one can not become an Ashanti, one can only leave the community. It is in large measure a community of blood, not solely culture. Thus there is clearly a discriminatory, non-liberal element involved. Appiah wishes to show that monarchy, especially in the form that it has among the Ashanti, need not be inconsistent with liberalism, i.e., if the system provides people with a sense of self-respect, then it is consistent with liberal ideas. In this manner, he justifies its exclusiveness, its discrimination, its lack of free choice in electing its authorities, and other negations of liberalism, while avoiding taking a clear

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development initiative in promoting partnership with Ghanaian traditional leaders," *Africa Today*, 4 (2009), 3-26.

[56] Even though Appiah declares himself to be a liberal, he doesn't shy from criticizing liberal policy. See idem, "The limits of being liberal," at esp. pp. 95-7, where he writes critically of the liberal principle of a state's neutrality in matters of religion.

stand or exploring issues that don't square with the liberal creed. And yet he seems to know that tradition has to submit to change and he perceives the future direction of that change.