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'No-Party' Politics and Local Democracy in Africa: Rawlings' Ghana in the 1990s and the 'Ugandan Model'

RICHARD C. CROOK

Ghana's decentralised form of administration run by elected District Assemblies was created in 1989 by Jerry Rawlings' military government. As in Uganda under Museveni's National Resistance Council regime, it was inspired by populist theories of participatory, community-led democracy which idealised the consensual character of 'traditional' village life and rejected the relevance of political parties. The Assemblies remain by law 'no-party' institutions, notwithstanding Ghana's transition to multi-party constitutional democracy in 1992. Their performance since 1989 is examined in the light of the question: to what extent can the Ugandan 'no-party' model continue within a context of party competition, given that it assumes the all-inclusive and non-conflictual character of community politics? The conclusion is that the contradictions between the no-party consensual model, de facto ruling party domination and the reality of local conflict have created significant difficulties for the Assembly system. Participation has declined and conflict-resolution been made more difficult, whilst the legitimacy and transparency of resource decisions have been undermined.

The Ghanaian political system today is a rather unusual combination of two quite distinct forms of government. On the one hand, at the national level, it is a constitutional, multi-party democracy in which opposition parties hold 33.5 per cent of the seats in Parliament, and the President (J.J. Rawlings) was elected in 1996 with 57.4 per cent of the popular vote. On the other hand, at the district level and below it has a decentralised form of elected local government and administration (the District Assembly) which is by law 'non-partisan'. That means that neither the ruling party nor opposition parties are allowed to sponsor candidates, campaign or play a role in the life of the District Assemblies (DAs) – although Members of Parliament (MPs) are *ex-officio* non-voting members of their local DAs. The DA system is based upon notions of community participation and populist direct democracy deriving from the period of Rawlings'

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'revolutionary' military government, 1982–92. It is one of the few institutional structures to have survived, virtually unchanged, the transition in 1992 from the military-based Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) regime to the party-based elected government of President Rawlings and his National Democratic Congress (NDC). The DAs were incorporated into the 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic under the provisions for local government, and their essential features were confirmed and strengthened by new legislation and extra sources of funding from a District Assemblies Common Fund in 1993.¹

The Assemblies themselves are directly elected representative bodies, and were originally intended to be the basis for a pyramidal national structure of 'peoples' democracy' very similar to the current National Resistance Council structure in Uganda. Although that idea was abandoned with the new Constitution of 1992, the DAs' main mission is still to create and encourage, in co-operation with sub-district town and village bodies, community-based forms of economic and social development (or self-help, as it is called in Ghana), a project which forms the main theme of the government's political and ideological justification of the system. Their other main function is to supervise the administration of various former line Ministries which have been deconcentrated (or are in the process of being transferred) to District level since 1989, to form an integrated district governmental and financial apparatus.

How is it possible (if at all) for two such distinct and in many ways contradictory forms of democracy – representative and partisan on the one hand and community-based participatory on the other – to coexist within a single system? And what has happened in practice to the aspiration to give 'power to the people' and stimulate rural development through grass-roots democracy and accountability, given the reality of rule by a dominant party built around the enormously powerful figure of Jerry Rawlings? In attempting to answer these questions, the analysis which follows will draw substantially on research conducted since 1992 in two case study districts – East Akim and East Mamprusi – together with other comparative material.²

The Theory of 'No-Party' Democracy: The Ugandan Model and the PNDC's Ideological Legacy

The decentralization reform was first mooted by the PNDC regime in the early 1980s, when its revolutionary aspirations were still fresh. Rawlings' populist attacks on the corruption and oppression of Ghana's post-independence political elites stressed the need for the construction of new forms of direct democracy and community-based, self-reliant development. He was particularly hostile to 'Western' forms of representative,

parliamentary and electoral democracy, which he saw as having failed utterly in Ghana. Indeed, he frequently referred to multi-party electoral democracy as 'a foreign imposition of the colonial powers'.³ Soon after coming to power, the PNDC set up the National Commission for Democracy (NCD), under the Chairmanship of Justice D.F. Annan. The mission of the NCD (which took over the functions of the Electoral Commission) was to formulate a programme for the realisation of 'true democracy' in Ghana.⁴ Although the Commission stated its intention to engage in a lengthy and thorough consultation with the people, it did not have an entirely free hand; certain political assumptions and parameters had already been set by the regime. The main assumption was that, in the light of Ghana's disastrous post-independence experiences of various forms of government, serious thought should be given to what a truly Ghanaian form of democracy might look like, one which took into account 'our tradition, history and culture'. The NCD drew attention in particular to what it asserted were peculiarly Ghanaian socio-cultural values 'such as consultation, voluntary participation, consensus and self-reliance', and called for a radical new look at the issue of 'whether institutionalised opposition is a true guarantor of political democracy'.⁵

Such arguments were, of course, neither new nor specifically 'Ghanaian', in spite of the NCD's assertions. In the 1960s and 1970s many African countries had justified single-party rule in terms of 'African' traditional values, arguing that African judicial and political succession systems were based on the search for consensus. Traditional dispute settling procedures typically involved (it was said) prolonged and open public discussion until consensus was reached and social harmony or balance restored. The single party regimes of Kenya and Tanzania, for instance, argued that these values were embodied in a system which permitted local competition for office-holders and representatives who, once elected, performed a 'linkage' function by working for their 'community' interest at the national level.⁶ The Tanzanians in particular added a further justification, which was that the absence of horizontal socio-economic class divisions in rural African societies facilitated the construction of such a community interest.⁷ At the national level, the function of the ruling party was to integrate these community interests through a similar process of balancing and discussion until a national consensus was reached, representing the whole national community. It was assumed that, in the absence of class conflict, the main threat to national consensus came from ethnic, regional or religious divisions that were more dangerous because of their potential for territorial fragmentation. The single party, by establishing consensus, could either prevent the mobilisation and politicization of ethnically-aggregated communities or moderate what were potentially

irreconcilable conflicts between such aggregates if they had already emerged during the decolonisation period.

In the 1980s, both the PNDC regime in Ghana and the National Resistance Movement regime in Uganda developed this idealized notion of the African community to support their vision of an entirely non-partisan form of governance which would derive both its legitimacy and its mode of operation from local communities. The shift to 'no-partyism' was based on the idea that no citizen should be excluded, even by the requirements of single party membership. The model was the ideal of the village assembly, in which all adults could participate (as in a Greek *polis* except that women were not excluded, at least formally).

In Uganda after the victory of Museveni's National Resistance Army in 1986, every Ugandan was deemed to be 'member' of the NRM (which was said to be a 'movement', not a party) and therefore both eligible and indeed duty-bound to participate in elections for base-level Resistance Councils. These village Resistance Councils formed part of a national system of indirect elections, used to elect the supreme National Resistance Council in 1989; only the village level elections were direct, using a traditional queuing system. Since 1997, they have been transformed into local government authorities, indirectly electing up to District level, whilst the NRC has become a Parliament elected on a 'no-party' basis.⁸

In Ghana, perhaps because the PNDC had come to power through a military coup rather than a full scale war, there was no real equivalent to the NRM. But in the early days of the regime (1982-84) the revolutionary Peoples Defence Committees (PDCs) were supposed to emerge spontaneously from communities, and it was expected that 'every member of the community' would be 'organised within a PDC Committee of the Village, Area or Town council'.⁹ The Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) which replaced the PDCs after the defeat of the Marxist left in December 1984 were perhaps an equivalent of the NRM, but more exclusive in that they were specifically identified as Rawlings loyalists under the tight control of a central body. They were charged not only with the productionist functions of rural animation and mobilization but also with the security duties of acting as 'defenders of the revolution' and with 'exposing activities against the interests of the people and the state'.¹⁰ They still embodied, however, the all-inclusive character of PNDC populism in that the CDRs were also supposed to ensure the 'democratic participation of all Ghanaians in decision making processes at both the national and local levels' – an exhortation which for many Ghanaians was difficult to reconcile with the CDRs' security functions.

In addition to its inclusiveness, the theory of no-party village democracy assumes that there are no 'real' (that is, legitimate or officially recognized)

causes of social division at the local level. As 'ordinary people' in such places all have a common and obvious interest in 'development', which means the provision of basic services and infrastructures, the only causes of difference concern the practical difficulties of how to achieve these common goals. Political competition is, therefore, about the qualities of the individuals who wish to take responsibility for these matters, and their fitness to work for or represent their communities. Parties are not needed if competition is individualised in this way. Museveni took up the old Tanzanian 'classless society' argument and applied it in an even more extreme way to the politics of rural communities. According to Museveni, most Ugandans are subsistence peasants who are not interested in markets and are not divided by class; 'politics' only concerns this average peasant, submerged in his everyday struggle for survival, insofar as it addresses his basic needs.¹¹ This ideology underpins the continuing refusal of Museveni's government to permit party competition in national parliamentary and presidential elections. The 1996 Presidential election was supposed to be a choice between the personal qualities of Museveni and his permitted rival, Paul Ssemogerere, which Museveni won with over 70 per cent of the vote.¹²

The PNDC's emphasis on local, community-based democracy went further, however, than the idea of a non-exclusive and non-divisive form of popular participation; the Ghanaian regime also saw it as a way of actively destroying the elitism of previous political systems. Empowering local communities would 'forge a new political order which has its basis in local government'. According to the NCD, 'Self government must mean that political authority shall be in the hands of all communities who shall exercise it for their own benefit. In other words, a sound local government system shall be the basis and *sine qua non* of a sound national government.'¹³

The benefits of decentralisation and a new local government system were, therefore, given a central place in the PNDC's vision of true democracy, in which local governments would not only be the basic units of 'people's power' and 'people's rights in decision making', making them responsible for their own economic development, but would also form the basis for a new national democratic system: 'we cannot talk of representation at national level until and unless all our local government units are in place and functioning'.¹⁴ The District Assembly reform of 1989 (seven years after the regime had come to power) was, therefore, the culmination and embodiment of the PNDC's self-proclaimed intention to lay the foundations of a more just and democratic society. The Assemblies were presented as a fulfilment of the PNDC's revolutionary aim to bring 'power to the people' – a populist message which survived the break with the political left in 1984, and the regime's subsequent adoption of a series

of International Monetary Fund and World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes.

For the first two and a half years after they were created, the DAs continued to be seen as the basis for a Ghanaian version of democratic centralism, very similar to the NRM structure in Uganda. In a series of public 'seminars' held by the NCD in all the regional capitals during 1990, on the theme of 'The District Assemblies and the Evolving Democratic Process', the NCD consistently pushed the line that the Assemblies should be used as electoral colleges for a national representative assembly built up through indirect elections to regional levels, with organizational and functional interest group representatives added at each level. The regional meetings, often dominated by government supporters and DA representatives – although opposition activists did attend – uniformly supported these proposals. At the Kumasi forum, for instance, the DA representatives argued not just in favour of such a non-party assembly, but also for an Executive President elected on a 'non-party ticket'.¹⁵

The role long envisaged for the DAs in the PNDC's democratization plans was, however, suddenly and dramatically changed – indeed, eclipsed – in May 1991 by Rawlings' unexpected acceptance of the recommendations of the National Consultative Assembly that Ghana should adopt multi-party, electoral democracy as the basis of its new constitutional government. After 12 years of revolutionary talk, Ghana was to return to a conventional, liberal democratic form of constitutional government. Whatever the reasons for the policy change of May 1991,¹⁶ it made the PNDC's decision to preserve their 'flagship' institutions, the no-party District Assemblies, more problematic. They now appeared as relics of a 'constitution that might have been', particularly in view of aspects of their composition and structure which privileged the role of the PNDC's 'revolutionary organs' such as the CDRs and the 31st December Women's Movement, provided for the appointment of one-third of members by central government and gave local executive power to a PNDC-appointed political loyalist, the District Secretary.¹⁷ The newly emerged opposition parties could now argue that the continuation of the ban on parties at the District Assembly level was simply a cover – as it had been (they alleged) during the PNDC era – for domination by government and the Rawlings' party, the NDC.

After 1992, therefore, with the disappearance of the argument that the DAs would underpin a new form of truly Ghanaian national democracy, the Rawlings government was forced to emphasize much more strongly the argument that non-partisan government would provide a more effective mechanism for socio-economic development at the local level *because* it was based on community participation – a form of participation which in its

nature was more consensual and practical. In a speech given in 1994 to a national induction course for District Chief Executives (the post-1992 title for the former District Secretaries), President Rawlings stated that:

the rationale behind non-partisan local government is that governance at this level concerns immediate practical issues of local communities. The need to provide safe water, or to locate a KVIP toilet has nothing to do with political ideologies. It has nothing to do with whether or not the constituency chairman of this or that party lives in that locality ... If the amenity is not provided all will suffer, irrespective of their political affiliations, because it is necessary for the well-being of the community ... Besides, to waste valuable time on partisan rivalries will not only mean that less useful energy will be available to tackle the problems and handicaps of the disadvantaged members of our society; that attitude is indeed inconsistent with the tenets of responsible leadership.¹⁸

Although other parts of the speech exhorting people to rise above petty squabbles and 'ideological wrangling' suggest that Jerry Rawlings recognised that the reality of Ghanaian society did not always live up to his picture of what local government was all about, this is a classic statement of the 'consensual community' argument for no-party government – and of course reveals that Rawlings has never lost his original visceral contempt for party politics. The assertion that local communities – which are always identified with the DAs – have no *need* of party politics is indeed fundamental. Without that belief, it would be extremely difficult to justify the current system.

'No-Party' Democracy in Action? Popular Participation and Elected Representatives in the District Assemblies

How has Jerry Rawlings' vision of a participatory and consensual local government system worked in practice? In the first place, any review of the record must acknowledge and clarify the hybrid nature of the District Assembly structure itself. In spite of Jerry Rawlings' assertion that the DAs should be concerned only with practical community issues, the Assemblies are representative bodies. 70 per cent of the members are elected for single member wards covering territories with a minimum population of 75,000, although most of the rural districts have populations of between 150,000 and 240,000 and encompass many hundreds of 'communities'. Their contribution to 'grass-roots' politics depends, therefore, very much on the role which the elected members play in their own communities, and on the way in which those members interact with the sub-District bodies: the

Urban/Town/Zonal Councils and the Unit Committees. Only the latter, which are supposed to be formed for every group of 500 but in practice are successors to the old Village Development Committees, could be said to be grass-roots, local community institutions. But like the Town and Zonal Councils they are essentially consultative bodies with no autonomous powers or resources, which carry out functions as delegated by the DA, with DA funds. Under the 1994 legislation, the Unit Committees consist of 15 members, 10 elected at a public meeting organized by the Electoral Commission and five appointed by the District Chief Executive 'after consultation with' the Presiding Member of the District Assembly, the traditional authorities (chiefs) and any 'organised productive groupings'.¹⁹ The intermediate Town and Zonal Councils are not directly elected at all, being composed of five Assembly members from the area and ten representatives of the relevant Unit Committees on a rotational basis.

In practice, these lower level bodies have never functioned as intended since 1989. Elections for the Unit Committees under the new laws did not actually take place until June 1998; before that time, they had essentially functioned as extensions of the Rawlings CDR system. In 1991, the old unelected Village Development Committees (VDCs) which had survived as a well-established element in Ghanaian rural society under the law of 1967 were abolished and replaced by the Unit Committees.²⁰ Under the 1991 law, however, the Unit Committees were still under a 'dual' responsibility to both the DA and the CDR hierarchy, and their membership was essentially organized by the local CDR and District Secretary. With the 1994 legislation, the old UCs were wound up pending new elections and their functions taken over by two appointed 'Village Level Facilitators' nominated by the local community to work with their Assembly member. These VLFs, as was admitted, were drawn in the main from the former Unit Committee membership!²¹ Because of 'administrative delays' experienced by the Electoral Commission and legal challenges to the legislation in the Supreme Court, the VLFs continued as an interim measure until the 1998 elections.²²

Although the NDC government constantly refers to the DAs as examples of direct democracy it must, therefore, be remembered that there has been an almost complete failure to implement, even in the most minimal legal sense, the provisions for basic community and intermediate District bodies. In assessing the participatory record of the Assembly system we are forced to look primarily at the elected Assembly members in their capacity as community activists and representatives, and at the participation of the public through elections and attempts to influence or extract resources from district government.

The original intention of the non-partisan election system introduced for the first Assembly elections at the end of 1988 was to encourage 'ordinary

citizens' to come forward and represent the localities within which they themselves lived and worked. Five candidates were permitted for each seat, and they had to stand on their personal merit, integrity and 'proven participation in community development'; they did not need to speak English.²³ They were also required to be resident in the district. No deposit was required, however, and the government funded all campaign literature and publicity, in order, it was said, to ensure equality of all candidates. The form of the campaign was also novel; each candidate had to submit a photo and a 'life history' which was publicized. Candidates were then exposed to questions from the public at government-organised hustings over a period of three weeks, at which the candidates presented their manifestos.²⁴ In many respects the system was an attempt to formalize what had always been one of the realities of Ghanaian electoral behaviour, namely the emphasis put by voters on finding trustworthy communal representatives. The number of members for each Assembly also permitted a very close level of representation; in the two case studies of East Mamprusi and East Akim, there were average ratios of one member to around 2,200 electors and one to around 1,800 respectively, which were quite typical of the system as a whole.

The outcome of the 1988/9 elections seemed at first sight to show that the PNDC's carefully crafted scheme for the election of community representatives had worked remarkably well – although the NCD did admit that the three week campaigning period had not always been sufficient for candidates, particularly in difficult rural areas, to present their manifestos or to be disqualified after popular challenge.²⁵ Nevertheless the campaign had attracted considerable interest and enthusiasm amongst the population, with a national turnout of 59 per cent of the registered electorate, and 12,842 candidates standing for the estimated 7,260 seats.²⁶ In East Akim and East Mamprusi Districts around 19 per cent of the electorate had participated in candidates' campaigns, and the majority of elected representatives lived locally, and were locally rooted community activists.²⁷ Whilst on each Assembly a small core of PNDC sympathisers and officers of the revolutionary organs had been elected (28 per cent of East Akim elected members, which was relatively high), the majority of members were politically uncommitted. And, although well-educated, they were not from the absentee urban elites typical of so many previous party-run local government elections. This was what the PNDC said it had been hoping for.

This first cohort of elected representatives sat in the Assemblies until 1994, having had their mandate extended by the PNDC in order not to disrupt the 1992 transition elections. Unfortunately, by the time of the second set of Assembly elections, there is evidence that considerable disillusion and apathy had set in amongst Assembly members concerning

their role and the future of the DAs. Amongst the complex array of causes, two will be highlighted here.

First, was the paradoxical impact of many Assembly members' success at acting as community representatives. The Assembly system imposes at least three kinds of role on elected representatives; they are supposed to act as delegates for their wards or communities, fighting for a share of Assembly resources; in their capacity as community leaders, they are legally obliged to encourage and develop self-help development projects in their communities; and, as members of a district governing council, they must ensure sound management of district resources for the collective good, and support payment of the taxes which they approve. In the pursuit of these duties, they must (on pain of possible revocation of mandate by popular petition) maintain close regular contacts with their constituents. Evidence from the case-studies shows that on the whole the members elected in 1988 were quite successful at representing their constituents; 83 per cent of respondents in the mass survey could name their councillor, and councillors did keep contact mainly through public meetings and consultations with village leaders.²⁸ There is also evidence from these and many other studies that the Assembly reform was associated with a new wave of self-help development activities.

In one respect, this was as the PNDC had intended; the functions of the Assembly representatives were described in one official publication as: 'to help the communities to make the effort which would lift them out of apathy or lethargy and out of a practice of leaving community development decisions to central government'²⁹ Unfortunately, the more members were successful at fulfilling their community animator or leadership role, the more obvious became the contradictions with their roles in the Assembly. These contradictions arose directly from the political logic of the emphasis on the community delegate role of elected members, created by the exclusion of parties from local politics.

In the first few years of the Assemblies, members were pushed very hard by the government (through the District Secretaries) and by the local revolutionary organs to become involved in 'pay your local tax' campaigns. In spite, however, of members' efforts to support the Assembly's message that the availability of funding for development depended upon every community paying its taxes, it quickly became apparent that only a tiny minority of representatives could ever deliver the promised returns to their constituents. This was because of the shortage of resources and the large number of represented communities. If success was measured by a representative's ability to 'extract' resources from the Assembly, then most were doomed to fail. It was that which made Jerry Rawlings' picture of non-divisive local government so unrealistic. If it was just a question of deciding

whether or not one's own community was to have a water supply, everybody could agree it was better to have one. But the decisions facing the DA concerned how to choose between the equally valid claims of scores of competing communities. How could a representative explain failure to deliver even after constituents' taxes had been paid?

The alternative, which was to explain and justify Assembly allocations as aspects of a fair and rationally considered plan for district development (focusing perhaps on 'poles of growth' or, alternatively, on raising the standards of the remotest or poorest areas first) was very difficult in such a system. If every member considered the claims of their community to be paramount, then the success of a few could only be attributed to their personalistic connections with the district political and administrative elite, and hence 'unfair'.³⁰

The most successful Assembly members were, in fact, those who successfully encouraged development through self-help – usually the representatives of larger or wealthier towns and villages. It was this latter group who, in spite of the fact that they were doing what the government wanted, were often most angry about the Assembly. This was because they and their constituents saw the success of self-help as a measure of the Assembly's *failure*. The more that the communities successfully funded their own projects, the *less* likely they were to see the point in paying Assembly taxes. And the more an Assembly member had become identified with these self-help efforts, the less likely he or she was to support deeply unpopular Assembly tax-paying campaigns, or see value in their position as district-level representatives.

The Assembly members were in fact learning (if they did not already know) that the most effective form of community development in Ghana continued to be rooted in the spontaneous efforts of local leaders (often chiefs and farmers groups) to organise 'self-help' with the support and patronage of a 'home town' elite development association. Given some degree of local economic potential and a co-operative spirit amongst local elites and the people, it was possible to achieve something, regardless of the failure of formal institutions such as the Unit Committees. An ability to extract some roofing sheets or cement from the DA was simply an added (and uncertain) bonus.

A second reason for the decline in elected members' enthusiasm for the Assemblies came from the more general problem of development performance, particularly the responsiveness of Assembly programmes to popular needs. Although no aggregate figures are available, evidence from the two case studies considered here and from other cases shows that the development expenditures of most Assemblies did not increase significantly at least as a proportion of total expenditure in the period 1989–91,

remaining in the range 15–20 per cent.³¹ In East Akim and East Mamprusi, per capita real expenditure did increase in this period compared to the preceding District Councils between 1986 and 1988 – but the absolute amounts remained pathetically small, being the equivalent of US\$0.45 and US\$0.18 per capita for the whole period 1989–91!³² More importantly, perhaps, evidence from the mass survey shows that the two Assemblies spent virtually nothing on the areas identified by local people as their most strongly felt 'needs': road repairs, sanitation and water supplies, health and electrification. It is hardly surprising that only 22 per cent of respondents felt that the Assemblies had performed better than the previous (unelected) District Councils, and that 70 per cent felt that the Assemblies were 'unable to satisfy their needs'.³³

Kwaku Kessey's study of Kumasi City Council shows a similar picture; his survey of Kumasi residents found that: 'little attention is paid to community aspirations and consequently meagre outlays are handed down for social capital formation ... The direct and indirect public reactions to policy are apprehension and apathy towards the Assembly.' Respondents strongly disagreed with the proposition that 'the City Council was sensitive to the needs of residents'.³⁴

By 1993–94, therefore, many Assembly members felt demoralised by the lack of success of the Assemblies. For many, their efforts to become popular community development leaders had been undermined by the excessive emphasis of the Assemblies on tax collection, combined with a failure to actually deliver any return for those taxes. For others, success in the self-help field had made them increasingly sceptical of their Assembly's very *raison d'être*.

The introduction of the District Assemblies Common Fund in 1994–95 undoubtedly eased some of the resource shortages. According to some estimates, the Fund, drawing on five per cent of national government revenues, represented a tenfold increase in the amounts which had formerly come from central government ceded revenues, and by 1998 there had clearly been some improvement in the ability of the DAs to provide some visible projects in the rural areas. But the allocation of the Fund is tightly controlled by a new Department – the Office of the Common Fund Administrator – and by the Ministry of Finance which issues the funds only in accordance with specified and agreed, earmarked items of expenditures.³⁵

The disillusion of both representatives and the electorate was reflected in the subsequent DA elections of 1994 and 1998 (see Table 1).

In 1994 only about one-third on average of the original 1988/9 members stood for re-election. In East Mamprusi, 24 per cent stood and were re-elected, and in East Akim, only 17 per cent.³⁶ The decline in elected members' enthusiasm for local, non-partisan democracy was matched by a

TABLE 1
PARTICIPATION TRENDS IN GHANA'S DISTRICT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS,
1989-1998

	1989 ^a	1994 ^b	1998 ^c	1998 (contested areas only) ^d
Registered voters	5,922,838	8,255,056	9,270,000	8,831,861
Total votes cast	3,416,402	2,393,966	3,663,806	3,663,806
% turnout (of registered voters)	57.7	29.0	39.5	41.5

Sources:

- a. Figures from J.R.A. Ayee, 'The Implementation of the 1988-89 District Assembly Elections in Ghana', *Africa Insight*, Vol.20, No.3 (1990), pp.169-75. Ayee uses the official National Commission for Democracy statistics. The turnout based on these figures is slightly lower than the figure of 59 per cent usually cited, which seems to be derived from an average of (incorrect) regional percentages in the *Local Government Information Digest*, Special Issue No.3 of 1989.
- b. Based on 1992 register, corrected figures – generally believed to be illegitimately inflated by between 0.75 and 1.5 million names. See P. Nugent, *Big Men, Small Boys and Politics in Ghana: Power, Ideology and the Burden of History, 1982-1994* (London and New York: Pinter, 1995).
- c. Based on 1996 register, figures as reported in R. Jeffries, 'The Ghanaian Elections of 1996: towards a Consolidation of Democracy?' *African Affairs*, Vol.97, No.387 (1998), pp.189-208.
- d. The Electoral Commission of Ghana reported the results of the combined Unit Committee and District Assembly elections for 'contested areas' only – thereby producing a slightly higher turnout figure. Ghana, Electoral Commission, 'Results of the District Assembly and Unit Committee Elections of 1998', mimeo. (1998).

loss of interest and enthusiasm amongst the electorate. The participation rate in the 1994 elections fell to 29 per cent of a much larger electoral roll, so that the absolute numbers voting actually dropped from 3.4 million in 1988/9 to 2.4 million.³⁷ By 1998, it looked as though popular interest had revived somewhat, with an increased turnout of 39.5 per cent – still a low figure by comparison with the record turnout of 78.2 per cent in the general elections of 1996 – but not bad for local elections. In so far as turnout itself is, however, merely a function of the number of registered electors, which is often contested and affected by a variety of extraneous factors, it is more instructive to look at the actual number of voters. This shows that the number of people actually voting in 1998 (3.6 million) was only marginally more than those voting in 1989 (3.4 million), nearly ten years previously when (whatever the figure of registered voters) it can be asserted with some confidence that the total electorate must have been considerably smaller. Nevertheless, there was still sufficient interest in the Assembly elections to render them reasonably competitive: only ten per cent of the 4,814 Assembly electoral areas had an uncontested election.³⁸ It was a different story, however, with the long-awaited Unit Committee elections, which

were conducted simultaneously with the Assembly elections. In 65 per cent of the Unit elections there were ten or less candidates for the ten posts.³⁹ A benign interpretation is that informal village mechanisms had already operated to create the Committees without the need for a formal election. Newspapers, however, were full of stories of bitter conflict and attempts to prevent people standing, combined with apathy in many places, administrative chaos and lack of resources on the part of the Electoral Commission.⁴⁰ Given the legacy of the CDRs' role in these institutions, it is safe to assume that at least some of these stories were true.

In spite of the relative success of the Assembly reform in enhancing popular participation and creating councils of genuinely community-based elected representatives who, on the whole, made real efforts to represent their constituents, the DAs therefore ended their first nine years facing a major decline in their popularity. This can be attributed to the perception that the Assemblies had failed in terms of responsiveness and development performance. In other words, the elected members had failed to translate popular demands into institutional outputs, largely because of the inherent difficulties the system presented in establishing the accountability of both the local bureaucracy and the PNDC's/NDC's political representatives. Some of these difficulties were associated with the continuing tensions created by an imposed 'no-party' system, increasingly perceived as unfair; others arose from the failure of the government genuinely to decentralize administrative and political control structures.⁴¹

The Legacy of the PNDC's Control Mechanisms

One of the main reasons for the frustrations of elected members, and the problems which they experienced in establishing the accountability of the district administration to the Assembly, was the structure of PNDC controls built in to the 1988 system – itself an inherent part of the PNDC's plans for a Ugandan-style, no-party peoples' democracy. It was the survival of these ideas in the structure of DA institutions which produced continuing conflict and tension between the aspirations of members to be non-partisan community representatives, on the one hand, and the continuing role of Rawlings loyalists and central government officials on the other. The situation was exacerbated as unofficial anti-Rawlings partisans amongst the Assembly members began to identify themselves during the 1992 national elections. By the time of the 1994 district elections, such alignments were an open secret, and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) even claimed a 'victory' in the Ashanti and Eastern Regions.⁴² Yet three of the principal mechanisms of PNDC-established control remained in place:

- (i) the role of the District Secretary/District Chief Executive;
- (ii) the role of the revolutionary organs and their successor, the NDC;
- (iii) the nominated members.

(i) The District Secretary/District Chief Executive

The District Secretary (DS) was, as most analysts agree, the key official linking the government of Jerry Rawlings to the rural districts during the 1988–92 period. Directly appointed by Rawlings, not only was he/she head of the district administration and security; he was also Chairman of the Assembly's Executive Committee (rather than the Presiding Member elected by the Assembly itself) and therefore played a full and directive role in the workings of the Assembly. Most of the DSs were former army officers or non-commissioned officers, or activists of the parties and revolutionary groups of the 31 December who had remained loyal to Rawlings. During the 1988–92 period the DS could not be removed except by the PNDC itself, and Rawlings did indeed sack those who caused too much trouble at local level through excessive corruption or intrigue. But the removal of a DS was not easy, and it required much courage on the part of local Assembly leaders or district elites to challenge such an official, unless they had 'high' political connections.

In the two case studies, it was clear that the Assemblies were unable to challenge the DSs particularly when it involved control of staff and monitoring the use of Assembly finances. Both the official budgets themselves and the actual implementation of budgeted expenditure were frequently distorted by priorities determined by the DS. Some of these were simply to do with maintenance of his status and privileges – accommodation, staff, furniture, transport expenses and vehicles. Others derived from his political role as chief spokesman for the PNDC and co-ordinator of the revolutionary organs. It was during the 1992 elections, however, that the ability of the DSs to use their control of the Assemblies became most blatant. It is undeniable that the DSs played a crucial role in the NDC's victory, through their ability to implement the party's campaign deep into the most remote rural areas, using Assembly vehicles as well as those allocated to their office by central government, and Assembly-financed fuel. In both case-study districts, the DSs spent most of their time during the three months prior to the Presidential elections campaigning for Rawlings, in collaboration with the CDR personnel.⁴³

The new Local Government Act of 1993 renamed the District Secretary as District Chief Executive (DCE), and attempted to make the office more accountable by making him/her liable to removal by the DA after a vote of no confidence passed by a two-thirds majority. His initial appointment has also to be confirmed by a two-thirds majority of the DA. The process of

appointing and confirming the new cohort of DCEs during 1993–94 did little, however, to inspire confidence in their reformed status or the prospects that they would be accepted by opposition elements as non-partisan officials. In an attempt, perhaps well-intentioned, to clear out the 'old guard' of the PNDC era, President Rawlings announced in August 1993 his list of DCE nominees, of whom 90 were new and only 20 were continuations from 1988 to 1992. The process was immediately challenged by the opposition in the Supreme Court as unconstitutional, on the grounds that the appointments should not be confirmed by the existing DAs (those elected in 1988/9), but should rather wait for the new DAs to be elected under the new 1993 Act. When the Supreme Court upheld the opposition's petition, Rawlings went ahead and appointed the new DCEs anyway, under the old PNDC legislation (PNDC 207).⁴⁴ The government therefore pre-empted the possibility that the new Assemblies elected in 1994 would have come to a different view on some of the appointments, and succeeded in putting through a complete set of new, pro-NDC DCE appointments.

In July 1997, the majority of the 1993 cohort of DCEs was reappointed, with only 22 being removed. By the end of 1997 only one DA – Offinso in Ashanti – had refused to accept their DCE.⁴⁵

The DCEs continue, therefore, to challenge the notion that the Assemblies can operate as non-partisan bodies; and, as political appointees of the President, with all the resources that such a connection brings, they remain extremely powerful. In the 1996 general elections they seem to have played a similar role as in 1992, co-ordinating and driving the NDC's election campaign using all the resources of the district government and the Assemblies.⁴⁶ Yet the Ministry of Local Government, whilst recognizing that the District Chief Executives have an extremely hard job in balancing competing political factions, refuses to accept that the DCEs' association with the ruling party is an insuperable problem. Instead they are exhorted simply to behave with dignity and impartiality, and to win respect through their competence as individuals.⁴⁷

(ii) The Role of the Revolutionary Organs and the NDC

The revolutionary organs, namely the CDRs, the CDO (militia) and the 31st December Women's Movement, had always been intended to play a core part in the NDC's original plan for the Assemblies, as was shown above. During the first administration of the elected DAs, 1989–94, the government made sure that members of these organisations were either elected to the Assemblies in their own right (they formed 28 per cent of the East Akim Assembly's elected members) or were nominated directly (as in the case of East Mamprusi). These members therefore bridged the transition between the PNDC and the NDC's first democratic mandate.⁴⁸

Evidence from the mass survey in these two districts reveals that those who participated in the revolutionary organs had a quite distinctive socio-economic profile. Women participated in the Unit Committees in East Akim, for instance, in relatively equal proportions (unlike any other local institutions), although they tended to be younger, well-educated women. This undoubtedly reflected the power and influence of the well-funded 31 December Women's Movement, many of whose officers were schoolteachers seconded on full pay to the organisation. In East Mamprusi, the revolutionary organs were dominated by the young and well-educated (teachers and clerks) as might have been expected in such a traditional society, where they clearly formed a group opposed to the local elite. But the revolutionary organs also attracted low status youth such as students and the unemployed, reflecting, no doubt, the economic opportunities which they offered.

It is hardly surprising that the attempt to guarantee a role for such organisations produced conflict within the Assemblies, even before the shift to multi-party democracy. The severity of the conflict varied, not just according to the structure of local society, and whether the revolutionary organs had become associated with long-standing social and political challenges to the local elite (as in Akim and Mamprusi), but also according to the extent to which the area was sympathetic to Rawlings, and the way in which they were used by the DS. In many areas, they were used to enforce tax-paying campaigns, both for the 'basic rate' (poll tax) and other local fees for markets, lorry-parks and so on, and their heavy-handed methods frequently made them extremely unpopular. In border areas they were used in anti-smuggling campaigns which also had deeply divisive effects on local societies, according to the extent to which the CDRs were perceived as profiting from the operation or siding with one faction or another. Most importantly, perhaps, a severe institutional rivalry developed; CDR leaders would alternately accuse elected Assembly members of conniving in their constituents' non-payment of taxes in order to win popularity, or, of becoming too involved in tax collection in a way which exceeded their (the Assembly members') authority and led to corruption. It was the CDRs' complaints which were usually supported by the PNDC Secretary for Local Government, however, rather than the counter-accusations of Assembly members.⁴⁹

During the lead up to the 1992 elections, the CDRs undoubtedly provided a ready-made organisational cadre for the new NDC party — not always an unmixed blessing, given their reputation with the public. They were helped by another important pro-Rawlings organization, the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU). Although hardly a 'revolutionary' organ, the GPRTU had become one of the PNDC's most useful country-

wide networks through its control of the thousands of small bus and lorry services which form part of the every day life of rural Ghanaians. In fact its relationship with the government was so close that it had been given uniforms and received a government 'contract' to collect commercial vehicle taxation throughout the country. Representatives of the GPRTU were to be found on the Assemblies, of course, and in the two case-study districts they had been given contracts to run Assembly transport enterprises. At the district level, the NDC was in effect the creation of the DSs and the revolutionary organs, bankrolled by local elites and businesses that had benefited from DA and central government patronage (particularly GPRTU members). Help from the government and the DAs was mainly indirect, in the form of salaries of various personnel, vehicles, fuel, premises and publicity.

A legally prescribed role for the PNDC's revolutionary organs in the various levels of local government formally disappeared in the 1993 and 1994 legislation, as described above. But as at the Assembly level, the Unit Committee system provided a bridge for the NDC at the village level between 1992 and 1994. Under the 1991 law, the new Unit Committee was responsible to the Assembly for all local government matters and to the CDR Zonal Secretary for their 'political and revolutionary functions'. Of the 15 members, ten were elected at a public meeting organized by the Zonal CDR, and five appointed by the District Secretary 'with the concurrence of the Presiding Member of the District Assembly and the District Organising Assistant of the CDR'. Even after these CDR-run Committees ended in 1994, the government's programme for two Village Level Facilitators (a man and a woman) to be appointed to replace the Unit Committees (pending elections to be organized by the Electoral Commission) enabled individuals from those same Committees to continue to play a semi-governmental role until 1998. The failure of the grass-roots, participatory element in the DA system can in fact be largely attributed to the continuing confusion over the role of the former revolutionary organs in the 1991-98 period.

Perhaps more importantly than the ill-fated Unit Committees, however, was the fact that the CDRs and the 31st December Women's Movement did not disappear, but continued to operate as national organizations with a strong presence on the ground in the rural areas, whilst claiming 'NGO' status. The CDRs renamed themselves the Association of CDRs, whilst the 31 DWM, which had always claimed that status whilst being led by the President's wife, continued to enjoy the benefits of that patronage and the associated generous inflows of international aid donor funding. The position of Nana Konadu is in fact so powerful that some commentators characterise the 31 DWM as the 'women's wing' of the NDC. It is openly acknowledged

that the organisation is still staffed by seconded school teachers paid by the government, and is able to use district government resources and gain DA grants for its activities. The ACDR is also helped with seconded government officers and teachers, and its national head is in fact an official in the Office of the President, or 'Presidential Staffer', Nii Adjei Boye Sekan. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare also supports various other former 'revolutionary' groups such as the old Mobisquads, under the heading of 'Progressive Voluntary Organisations'.⁵⁰ It is, therefore, hardly surprising that these organisations undoubtedly played as big a role in the 1996 general elections as they had in 1992, and that the NDC's electoral mobilisation and support in the rural areas was so effective.⁵¹ At the same time, given their their importance for the NDC and Rawlings, they present the most blatant and divisive challenge to Rawlings' idealistic picture of a 'no-party' local government which could possibly be imagined, and are the object of ceaseless attacks by the opposition.

(iii) The Nominated Members

The PNDC's decision to reserve one-third of the Assembly's membership for appointment by central government aroused considerable controversy at the time, and has continued to be the subject of much discussion. The most obvious oppositional point was that it was simply an extra device to ensure government control through the appointment of Rawlings loyalists, somewhat unnecessary in the light of the powers given to the DS, but little more than a revival of the British colonial local government scheme of 1951. Others have seen it as an attempt to co-opt local elites and thereby create a 'political class' in the countryside with a stake in the PNDC system.⁵² In practice, the outcome was more pluralistic and in many ways unexpected.

Kwamena Ahwoi himself acknowledged that one objective was to balance the demands of elected members fulfilling their community delegate role with a group of members who had no electorate to please, and who could therefore take a more rational view of the interests of the 'district as a whole', as well as of the national interest.⁵³ In the two case studies, the appointed members tended to be well-educated professionals, businessmen and important chiefs (also well-educated), thereby bringing into the Assemblies such people as university lecturers, retired civil servants and army officers, modern sector business managers, medical and educational professionals, including two secondary school headteachers and an Assistant Director of Education. This is a picture confirmed by other observers; Nugent, for instance notes that one-fifth of all nominees were chiefs, and that they included well-known oppositionists.⁵⁴

In spite of the government's stated 'revolutionary' aim to make the Assemblies the fulfilment of their promise to ensure the participation of

disadvantaged groups such as 'the poor, the unschooled in English and public officers',⁵⁵ it seems clear, therefore, that the nominations were addressing a different agenda, but one very familiar in Ghanaian political culture: the belief that the successful sons and daughters of a community should associate themselves with its 'development'. This was not necessarily the same as building a PNDC political organization in the countryside, but did fit quite well with the NCD's vision of a consensual, non-partisan, 'Ghanaian' form of local democracy. The outcomes were, however, not quite as the NCD intended – as indeed, anybody with a knowledge of the realities of Ghanaian local politics would have predicted. Evidence from the often lively debates of the case-study Assemblies shows that nominated members did not routinely act as government stooges. On the contrary, many of them were frequently the only people with the status and education (and hence the confidence) to challenge the policies or behaviour of the DS or the district administration. More significantly for our present theme, many in the areas which were perhaps already sympathetic to anti-Rawlings forces – Ashanti, Eastern Region, Western Region – became the core of opposition groups when multi-party politics took off. So the Assembly system, as well as helping to co-opt local elites into the enterprise of local development, had also provided a basis for the political mobilisation of all forces, not just those of the Rawlings camp.

Conclusion: Rawlings and the Myth of Local 'No-party' Democracy

The decentralized administration and District Assembly system created in 1988–89 was based on a theory of community-level, participatory, no-party democracy which idealized the consensual character of 'traditional' Ghanaian village life. It was also intended to be the first stage of a national structure of populist or, as Rawlings called it, 'true democracy', which as in Uganda would have involved a pyramid of indirectly elected authorities under the leadership of Rawlings and his loyalist support organizations – his revolutionary 'movement'. Even though the change to a constitutional competitive party system in 1992 changed the Assemblies into what were effectively conventional local government authorities combined with the district administration, they continued to carry the ideological baggage of the PNDC era, and continued to embody in their structures many of the features of that period such as the no-party rule, strong mechanisms of central political and administrative control and a privileged position for Rawlings' support groups.

This populist vision of the Assembly system soon came up against the realities of Ghanaian society, with unintended consequences for the policy of democratic decentralization. The election of over 7,000 local councillors

and the nomination of some 3,600 others unleashed the deeply embedded currents of communal conflict, class division, ethnic and familial factionalism inherent in Ghanaian local politics which had been only temporarily suppressed during the 1980s. These currents now swirled around the entrenched mechanisms of PNDC power, with some Assembly members – probably the majority of the rural DAs – inevitably drawn by the attractions of the incumbent government, others regarding them as increasingly unfair relics of an experiment in populist dictatorship. These conflicts were further exacerbated by the bitter party conflicts which followed Rawlings' contested election victory in 1992, and which have continued since 1996.

Whilst the idea of non-partisan representation of communities has some validity – as the experience of the Assembly elected members had shown — trying to operate a district-level representative council as if it could be consensual and conflict-free is even more utopian than the idea of traditional village democracy. In the first place it makes democratic decision-making and resolution of the inevitable conflicts between communities extremely difficult. In a district council which is attempting to aggregate the interests of hundreds of different villages and towns, it is virtually impossible to get agreed resolutions of rival claims when councillors are community delegates whose main purpose is to fight for the allocation of resources to their communities. All arguments sound like special pleading. In the absence of a relatively neutral decision-maker, such as officials from a higher level of government, all decisions look like favouritism, with deleterious consequences for transparency and legitimacy of local government.

Secondly, for the same reasons, it also undermines the legitimacy of district taxation. If the 'district' is simply a level of government which is not acknowledged by local residents as having a legitimate collective interest, then it fails as a device for 'scaling up' the moral economy which makes community-level, voluntary contributions to development projects possible.⁵⁶ As analysed above, representatives have to resort to the self-defeating (and obviously false) argument that paying taxes will produce an immediate return to their particular community.

Thirdly, the maintenance by district officials of the idea that there is a non-partisan, district interest whilst refusing to acknowledge that the system is in fact run by the ruling party and its supporters has a deeply exclusionary effect on those who are not members of the ruling party. It is in many ways worse than an official single party system, which runs on the assumption that all interests do have to be accommodated 'within the party' (one of the justifications of the system in Uganda continues to be that the National Resistance Movement is an incorporative national 'movement' which

makes party competition unnecessary). Instead, decisions are taken by officials such as the DCE and his supporters which may not be neutral, and can be taken whilst excluding all opposition. This in turn causes deeper resentment and increases rather than reduces conflict.

Fourthly, the no-party rule prevents the operation of the scrutiny and public accountability that comes from having an officially acknowledged party opposition in the council. Giving publicity to corruption, maladministration and favouritism, and monitoring the performance of a local government authority is still a role which institutionalized opposition can perform, in spite of current fashions for denying its 'relevance' to African or Asian societies.

The Assemblies continue, therefore, to embody the unresolved contradiction in the Ghanaian political system between party competition at the national level and 'no-party' politics at the local level. The NDC is reluctant to admit that the attempt to maintain a non-partisan rule at local level is flawed. On the one hand, the DAs are seen, particularly by the opposition, as a structure of patronage and control exercised for the most part by Rawlings loyalists in the rural districts. Indeed many would argue that the original political objective of the system was to serve as a mechanism for articulating the PNDC's power in the rural areas, and for mobilizing support groups with a 'stake' in the distribution of resources and political patronage by district governments. On the other hand, they are clearly a focus for dissent and conflict at the local level, and a source of continuing demands for extra resources which certain elements in the government (particularly the Finance Ministry) view with alarm, particularly since the resources available to them have in fact increased with the introduction of the District Assemblies Common Fund. It might be thought that as they are no longer the core of the national 'no-party' political structure which Rawlings had wanted and probably in his heart of hearts still prefers, they might have been downgraded or even abandoned. But the controlling instincts of the regime are still very strong; hence it clings to the benefits inherent in the no-party rule, even whilst its increasingly untenable character undermines the effectiveness and legitimacy of the DAs, both as institutions for local democratic participation and for the inevitably contested allocation of developmental resources.

NOTES

1. See Civil Service Law, 1993 (PNDC 327); Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462); District Assemblies Common Fund Act, 1993 (Act 455).
2. See R. Crook, 'Four Years of the District Assemblies in Operation: Decentralization, Democratization and Administrative Performance', *Public Administration and Development*, Vol.14 (1994), pp.339–64 and R. Crook and J. Manor, *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa: Participation, Accountability and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
3. Interview, *New African*, Dec. 1988.
4. Ghana, *The Search for True Democracy in Ghana* (Accra: Information Services Department, n.d. (probably 1985)).
5. Ibid.
6. J. Barkan, *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania* (New York: Praeger, 1984); D. Martin, 'The 1975 Tanzanian Election: The Disturbing Six Per Cent', in G. Hermet, R. Rose and A. Rouquié, *Elections Without Choice* (London: Macmillan, 1978), and L. Cliffe and J. Saul, *Socialism in Tanzania* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1972).
7. J. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism: Uhuru and Ujamaa* (Dar-es-Salaam, Oxford University Press, 1968); Kweka, 'One-Party Democracy and the Multiparty state', in Colin Legum and G. Mmari (eds.), *Mwalimu: the Influence of Nyerere* (London: James Currey, 1995).
8. E. Brett, 'Rebuilding Organisation Capacity in Uganda under the National Resistance Movement', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.32, No.1 (1994), pp.53–80; N. Kasfir, 'The Ugandan Elections of 1989', in Holger B. Hansen and M. Twaddle (eds.), *Changing Uganda: the Dilemmas of Structural Adjustment and Revolutionary Change* (London: James Currey, 1991) and N. Kasfir, 'No-Party Democracy in Uganda', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.9, No.2 (1998), pp.49–63.
9. Ghana, *Outlines of the Decentralization Plan of the PNDC* (Accra: Information Services Department, n.d. (circa Dec. 1982)).
10. Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, *Committee for the Defence of the Revolution Guidelines* (Accra: Nsamankow Press, 1986).
11. Cited by Nelson Kasfir from Museveni's book, *Sowing the Mustard Seed: the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda* in Kasfir, 'No-Party Democracy', p.60.
12. Kasfir, 'No-Party Democracy'.
13. Ghana, *The Search for True Democracy*.
14. Ibid.
15. Report in *West Africa* (London), 17–23 Sept. 1990.
16. There is some consensus around the view that the PNDC had concluded that it could easily win a competitive election if it formed a Rawlings party, whilst at the same time silencing both its domestic and international critics.
17. The CDRs were formally incorporated into sub-District bodies such as the village-level Unit Committees and were given a 'watchdog' role both inside and outside the Assemblies, on the assumption that the nomination procedure would be used to ensure that at least some CDR representatives were always present. Kwamena Ahwoi, 'CDRs and the New Democratic System', *Local Government Information Digest*, No.6 (1989), pp.15–19.
18. *Local Government Information Digest*, No.7:5 (1994).
19. Legislative Instrument (L.I.) 1589 of 1994.
20. See Legislative Instrument (L.I.) 540 of 1967 and L.I. 1514 of 1991.
21. Levina Owusu, 'Integration of Sub-District Structures and Communities in the Development Process', *Local Government Information Digest*, No.10:6 (1998).
22. Press statement by Mr Kwamena Ahwoi, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, *Local Government Information Digest*, No.11:1 (1998).
23. B. Ankomah, 'Elections Extraordinary', *New African* (Dec. 1998); E. Gyimah-Boadi, 'Economic Recovery and Politics in the PNDC's Ghana', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol.28, No.3 (1990), pp.328–43; J.R.A. Ayee, 'The Implementation of the 1988–89 District Assembly Elections in Ghana', *Africa Insight*, Vol.20, No.3 (1990), pp.169–75; *West Africa*, 9 Nov. 1987.

24. J.R.A. Ayee, 'The Implementation', and J.R.A. Ayee, 'Decentralization and local government under the PNDC of Ghana', unpublished paper presented to CODESRIA (University of Ghana 1-3 March 1991); *Africa Report*, July 1989; S. Woode, *Making the District Assembly Work* (Accra: Tema Press, 1989).
25. Ayee, 'The Implementation'.
26. Ibid. and K. Ninsin, 'The PNDC and the Problem of Legitimacy', in D. Rothchild (ed.), *Ghana: the Political Economy of Reform* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991); this compared very well with the 18.4 per cent turnout in the last local elections held under military rule in 1978.
27. Figures based on a quota sample survey of 628 respondents; see Crook and Manor, *Democracy*.
28. Crook and Manor, *Democracy*, p.219.
29. *Local Government Information Digest*, Vol.5: 1 (1992).
30. The very idea of the district and its Assembly as a legitimate collective enterprise was further undermined by 'rebate' schemes to directly relate Assembly contributions to village projects to the amount of tax paid by a community, although even these schemes had mostly failed in the two case studies by 1992.
31. Crook and Manor, *Democracy*, p.267.
32. Ibid., pp.249-51.
33. Ibid., p.254.
34. K. Kessey, *Financing Local Development in Ghana (Kumasi)* (Dortmund: SPRING Research Series No.12, Faculty of Spatial Planning, University of Dortmund, 1995), p.157. The average score on an agree/disagree scale of +2 to -2 was -0.47.
35. J.R.A. Ayee, 'Financing Sub-national Governments in Ghana: the District Assemblies Common Fund', *Regional and Federal Studies*, Vol.5 (1995), pp.292-306.
36. *Local Government Information Digest*, Vol.7, No.3 (1994); J.R.A. Ayee, 'The Measurement of Decentralization: The Ghanaian Experience', *African Affairs*, Vol.95, No.378 (1996), p.44.
37. Calculated from figures in P. Nugent, *Big Men, Small Boys and Politics in Ghana: Power Ideology and the Burden of History, 1982-1994* (London and New York: Pinter, 1995) and J.R.A. Ayee, 'The December 1996 General Elections in Ghana', *Electoral Studies*, Vol.16, No.3 (1997), pp.416-27.
38. Figures provided by kind permission of the Electoral Commission, July 1998.
39. Ibid.
40. *Local Government Information Digest*, Vol.11: 2 (1998).
41. In 1996, the government was still referring to the plans for setting up offices of the deconcentrated line Ministries under DA control as 'yet to be implemented', and as of 1998, the legislation for staff to be transferred to a new Local Government Service was still 'in preparation'. See 'Address by Nathaniel Qauo, Presidential Staffer, to the 8th Annual Workshop on Decentralization, University of Ghana', *Local Government Information Digest*, Vol.9: 5 (1996), and 'Press statement by the Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, Mr Kwamena Ahwoi', *Local Government Information Digest*, Vol.11: 1 (1998).
42. P. Nugent, *Big Men*, p.276.
43. Crook and Manor, *Democracy*, p.245.
44. J.R.A. Ayee, 'The Politics of the Election of District Chief Executives under the NDC party Government in Ghana', unpublished paper (Department of Politics, University of Glasgow, 1994).
45. *Local Government Information Digest*, Vol.10: 5 (1997).
46. Ayee, 'The December 1996 General Elections'; R. Jeffries, 'The Ghanaian Elections of 1996: Towards a Consolidation of Democracy?', *African Affairs*, Vol.97, No.387 (1998), pp.189-208.
47. Address by Nana Ato Dadzie, Presidential Staffer, to Third DCE Conference at Sekondi, 29 October 1996, *Local Government Information Digest*, Vol.9:5 (1996).
48. Kwamena Ahwoi, 'CDRs and the New Democratic System', *Local Government Information Digest*, Vol.6 (1989), pp.15-19.

49. See *Local Government Digest*, Vol.6 (1989).
50. See K. Boafo-Arthur, 'Party Organization, Finance and the Democratic Process: The Case of the Opposition Parties', in J.R.A. Ayee, *The 1996 General Elections and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana* (Legon: Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, 1998), p.81; *Free Press* (Accra), 22–28 July 1998.
51. Ayee, 'the December 1996 General Elections', p.426; Jeffries, op. cit., p.200; P. Nugent, op. cit.
52. E. Gyimah-Boadi, 'Economic Recovery and Politics in the PNDC's Ghana', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol.28, No.3 (1990), pp.328–43.
53. Address by the PNDC Secretary for Local Government, Agona Swedru, 27 July 1988, in: Ghana, *From Centre to the Grassroots* (Accra: Ministry of Local Government, 1991), p.15.
54. P. Nugent, op. cit., p.178.
55. Ghana, op. cit., p.79.
56. See P. Evans, 'Government Action, Social Capital and Development: Reviewing the Evidence on Synergy', *World Development*, Vol.24, No.6, (1996), p.1125.