



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

MINISTRY OF CHIEFTAINCY
AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS
P. O. BOX 1627
STATE HOUSE
ACCRA

www.mcta.gov.gh

THE BIRTH OF THE CODE OF ROYAL ETHICS

In one of his scholarly presentations, Prof. Adjayi a distinguished researcher on chieftaincy matters and a historian stated that the Institution of Chieftaincy in the contemporary world has to be reinvented that is tradition has to be reinvented again. He argues that Chieftaincy has to be transformed from the static into the dynamic ever evolving phenomenon.

Perhaps borne out of this view point, the Chieftaincy Institution in the country has once again been lifted to greater heights by the National House of Chiefs with the support of the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs. The occasion was the launch of the code of ethics for the Chieftaincy Institution at a colourful ceremony at Alisa Hotel on Wednesday June 6, 2013. The brief but rather impressive colourful event was graced by the President of the National House of chiefs, Naa Prof John Nabila, the Vice President of the National House of Chiefs, Presidents of the various Regional Houses of Chiefs, Queenmothers from various traditional areas and stakeholders in the Chieftaincy Institution. You may call it the dawn of a new era or the rebirth of the Chieftaincy Institution to reflect the contemporary needs of modern society. The launch of the 18 page document by the sector Minister for Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs Dr. Henry Seidu Daannaa accompanied by his deputy Mr. Alexander John Ackon provided a platform for stakeholder interaction on chieftaincy matters and the way forward. The significant thing about the launch was that the sector Minister who launched the publication was himself the main architect and brain behind the code, taking it through the processes to the final document while he (Dr. Daannaa) was serving as the Principal Research Officer at the Ministry of Chieftaincy prior to his appointment as the sector Minister in January. It was therefore quite revealing that his efforts over the years to provide a working document for Nananom including Queen mothers has not been in vain. Today, the good news is that the Chieftaincy Institution like any other Institution, organization, Association or Group has a code of ethics it can proudly boost of.

The Code: The Code of Royal Ethics becomes the reference point to guide and regulate the conduct of Nananom. According to Naa Prof. Nabila, president of the National House of Chiefs, the code will help Nananom including Queenmothers to perform their duties diligently in accordance with the provision of the 1992 Constitution, the Chieftaincy Act 759 (2008) and for that matter all other laws of the state. The code will promote

accountability, constantly reminding Nananom of their unique position and status as the custodians of the Cultural Heritage of the land. The 18 page booklet is divided into five parts. (iii) which spells out the specific Rules for Chiefs. One finds in this part issues relating to the "dos" and "don't" of Nananom. The commitment to the dignity to the Institution of Chieftaincy; commitment to the community and the People; commitment to colleagues and other chiefs and finally commitment to the stool, the Royal Family, Elders and counsellors' the details are clearly spelt out.

It is of interest to note that the violation of the code per se would not constitute grounds for deposition of a chief unless such infraction was already a ground for deposition under the customary law in a particular traditional area, Naa Prof. Nabila stated. For instance the provision under 3.3.5 that a chief should not engage in extra marital relationship with spouses of subjects or other persons or in any conduct involving moral turpitude does not necessary mean a chief would be destooled when found culpable of this misdemeanor unless it is already part of the customary law of the traditional area.

Reaction: There are those who hailed the National House of Chiefs for coming out with the code. They argue that it is one way by which the Institution of Chieftaincy is seen as reforming itself from within and make the Institution more dynamic, responsive and relevant to the needs of the 21st century. After all, it is incumbent on institutions and organizations to periodically take stock of their performances and evaluate it with a view to adopting new pragmatic measures to meet challenges of the future. The chieftaincy Institution is no exception. It is in line with its vision and mandate, especially in reference to the 1992 Constitution, the chieftaincy Act 759 (2008) and other laws of the state.

The code will no doubt go a long way to promote and protect the image and sanctity of the chieftaincy Institution. Certainly there is no doubt about the fact that as a Human Institution it is bound to face challenges and one way of dealing with the challenges is to provide avenues for redress and related issues. Indeed this school of thought believes that the Code of Royal Ethics has come at a good time and a plus for the National House of Chiefs and the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs. This opinion was re-echoed by the Minister for Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs at the Launch. According to Dr. Daannaa, the code will disabuse the minds of those who have misgiving or who are skeptics of the Institution. Nonetheless, there are those who differ in their opinion. They believe the Chieftaincy Institution has come of age and our chiefs epitomize reverence and sanctity, and therefore do not need a code of ethics to regulate them.

The debate continues to engage critical minds. It is refreshing to note that Nananom themselves have whole heartedly approved of the code following their adoption of the Draft document on November 15, 2012. The support of the Konrad Adeneur Stiftung needs to be commended for their assistance to the Chieftaincy Institution over the years. The assurance by the Resident Representative Dr. Gregor Ryssel that the Foundation will

continue to be a partner in the programmes of the National House of chiefs and by extension the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs is a welcome news and deserves appreciation.

Significance: The code of ethics is a novelty, the first of its kind in the history of the Chieftaincy Institution in Ghana. It is a further demonstration of the fact that the Chieftaincy Institution just like any other institution or association aspires to promote the dignity of the Institution and bring it to the level of excellence. It is also quite significant in the sense that Nananom are prepared to bring changes into the Institution where necessary to reflect the needs of contemporary society. It shows that the Institution is dynamic and not static, that the Institution is progressive and capable of dealing with its own challenges. The code is regarded as the right direction towards transforming the Institution.

It is therefore imperative on Nananom to make the document a living document and uphold the dignity of the Institution so as to sustain the profound reverence people have for the Institution. Opinions generally suggest that there should be a new vision for the Chieftaincy Institution. A vision that is global, modern, entrepreneurial must be constructed as stated by the renowned scholar Prof Adjayi and to achieve this, the Institution of Chieftaincy must be recognized that it is capable of re-inventing itself, of negotiating and modifying itself to sustain it into the future. And this vision of promoting development and excellence is shared by the National House of Chiefs and the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs.

Nelson Kofi Akatey (PRO)
Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs
Tel: 0267180680/0277450038
website: www.mcta.gov.gh