Letter 17

Jean Barbot

French merchant Jean Barbot (1655–1712) traveled to West Africa in 1678–79 and 1681–82 as a commercial agent on French slaving voyages. His account is a series of letters based partly on personal observations and partly on published European sources, often confirming earlier European observations and their biases. In letter 17 below, presumably written in 1679, Barbot describes the body types, character, and dress of Gold Coast peoples.

I treat the Gold Coast as extending from the Rio da Sueiro d'a Costa [Tano River] to River Volta, although the Dutch regard it as beginning at Axim and ending at Acra [Accra]. I think this extension fully justified, since more gold can be found [in the additional localities] than other communities, it only being between Lay and River Volta that the trade is limited to slaves.

. . .

You discover daily that the natives have a splendid mental capacity (*génie*), with much judgment and a sharp and ready apprehension, which immediately understands whatever you suggest. They have so good a memory that it is beyond comprehension, and although they cannot read or write, they are admirably well-organized in their trading and never get mixed up. I have seen one of the brokers on board trading four ounces of gold with 15 different persons and making each a different bargain, without making any mistakes or appearing the least harassed. . . .

Although their forms of dress are completely different from ours, they are nevertheless of interest, and they make a display in them. However, there is one kind of dress which is very common among both the great and the small, the rich and the poor, and this is always to wear a cloth (*pagne*) (from Holland, Cape Verde or elsewhere) around the waist, a cloth which passes between the thighs and whose ends hang down to the ground, behind and before, or in some instances only to the knees. This is worn in the house or when travelling. But when they go through the streets, they take a length of Leyden serge or *perpetuana*, 2–3 ells in length, which they pass

around their neck, above and below the shoulders, like a mantle, and they take a spear (*assegaye*) or a stick in their hand, for the look of things. They go about this way in the village, carrying themselves with gravity and deliberation, and followed by a slave with a little seat. Nobles and merchants distinguish themselves from the common people by wearing larger and richer material, China satin, or colored Indian cloth, worn as a mantle.

They wear their hair in various fashions. Some shave it all off except for a cross the size of a thumb, others leave a crescent shape, others again a circle or several circles. Others again put their hair into plaits and put these in curl-papers. However they do it, each man seeks to arrange it some new way. Plaiting of hair is the duty of wives. Most of them have hats bought from the whites, but others have hats made of straw or of goatskin or the hide of dogs, these skins having been stretched on wooden blocks to dry. Others again have caps of the same materials, and in various shapes for different hair-styles. They attach to them fetish-objects, glass trinkets, goat's horns, or bark of the fetish tree, and some enrich them with small pieces of worked gold, or with monkey's tails. Slaves go bareheaded.

They adorn their necks, arms, legs and even feet with many strings of glass beads, coral and Venetian *rassade* [colored glass beads]. I have seen some who had whole bunches of 4 ct. [carat] of this *rassade* hanging aslant from their necks, intermixed with an abundance of their small gold ornaments and bark from the fetish tree, over which they mutter their frequent prayers. They have also on their arms and legs ivory bracelets they call manilas, often three or four on each arm. They make these themselves, from elephant tusks brought from Ivory Coast or from the interior. I have specifically prepared for you an illustration showing these little trinkets, so that you may more easily visualize them. Almost all are of gold or of *Conta de Terre*, which is a bluestone [called *akori* beads] from Benin, as costly as gold itself.

Liking display, they achieve it. They also take care of their clothes, changing them when they return home or storing them carefully in little deal chests we sell them. They like to have plenty of clothes, and they want the fabrics we sell them to be sound and well conditioned. That, Sir, is all I have to say to complete the portrait of these African men. I will now labor on that of the women, after drawing for you some of these Moors, to satisfy you.

The women/wives of these blacks are in general of a lithe, relaxed and upright build, tending to average size, and decidedly plump, with a fine head, sparkling eyes, an aquiline nose mostly, long hair, a small mouth, beautiful teeth, and a well-turned neck. They are lively in spirit, lascivious and covetous, attached to their house-keeping, great talkers, haughty to

Noble Women. Jean Barbot's depiction of three Gold Coast women of noble stature, ca. 1688, from *Description des Côte d'Afrique*, vol. 2, United Kingdom National Archives: PRO, ADM 7/830B, p. 43. Used by permission of the Image Library, United Kingdom National Archives.

their inferiors, fond of eye-catching dress and of their wardrobe, and eager to steal when they can. They take great care of their house and their children, and make their daughters help in house-keeping and cooking as soon as they begin to grow up. They are sparing in their eating, and very clean, inasmuch as they wash themselves daily in the sea or a stream. They keep their heads very tidy. . . . They anoint their hair with palm oil, and decorate it with gold ornaments or red sea-shells and with *rassade*. They often put red or white coloring on their faces, on the brow and eyebrows, and on the cheeks, and they make little cuts on each side of the face. Others have raised marks (*tumeurs*) and pinking (*découpures*) done on their shoulders, breast, belly, and thighs, so that from a distance one might think that they were dressed in pinked material (the men do much the same). They load their neck, arms and legs with bracelets or ribbons when a ceremony is being held. I saw some at Acra so attired, and they seemed very pretty, their complexion apart, which nevertheless was fine and smooth. . . . But although some of these African women were very pleasing, among them are some called *etiguafou* [Akan: *aguamamm[fo]*, "prostitute"], who have made themselves public prostitutes, and who are distinguished from the others by their fine appearance and their clothing. . . . They dance very well in the fashion of the blacks, and have dancing schools for the young people.

Report on the Riots of 1948

Commission of Enquiry into Disturbances in the Gold Coast

In February 1948, a group of unarmed ex-servicemen in Accra marched toward the Osu castle, the seat of government at that time, to petition the governor for their still-outstanding pension. The police fired on the group, killing three of the ex-servicemen; this precipitated riots throughout the city. These riots soon assumed national significance: people participated in them to express other grievances, such as the general dissatisfaction with the prices of imported goods. Consequently, during the ensuing fracas, rioters and looters alike targeted the shops of foreign merchants. The British authorities managed to quickly suppress the riots, appointed a commission led by Aiken Watson to investigate the unrest, and promptly arrested the leaders of the fledgling political party, the United Gold Coast Convention, on suspicion of instigating the disturbances. The riots therefore brought to the surface the serious underlying political tensions in the country. Not surprisingly, scholars now consider the 1948 riots the point of departure for the process through which Ghana gained political independence from Britain, as the subsequent investigation by the Watson Commission paved the way for constitutional reforms. The excerpts here outline the contents of the commission's report to the British government.

In the main, the underlying causes may be divided into three broad categories: political, economic and social. There is often no clear dividing line between them and they are frequently interrelated. . . . The remedy for the distrust and suspicion with which the African views the European, and which is to-day poisoning life in the Gold Coast, demands an attack on all three causes. None of them may be said to take precedence. . . . These may be summarized as follows:

A. Political.

(1) The large number of African soldiers returning from service with the Forces, where they had lived under different and better conditions,

made for a general communicable state of unrest. Such Africans by reason of their contacts with other peoples, including Europeans, had developed a political and national consciousness. The fact that they were disappointed with conditions on their return, either from specious promises made before demobilization or a general expectancy of a golden age for heroes, made them the natural focal point for any general movement against authority.

(2) A feeling of political frustration among the educated Africans who saw no prospect of ever experiencing political power under existing conditions and who regarded the 1946 Constitution as mere window-dressing designed to cover, but not to advance their natural aspirations.

(3) A failure of the Government to realize that, with the spread of liberal ideas, increasing literacy and a closer contact with political developments in other parts of the world, the star of rule through the Chiefs was on the wane. The achievement of self-government in India, Burma and Ceylon had not passed unnoticed on the Gold Coast.

(4) A universal feeling that Africanization was merely a promise and not a driving force in Government policy, coupled with the suspicion that education had been slowed up, and directed in such a way as to impede Africanization.

(5) A general suspicion of Government measures and intentions reinforced by a hostile press and heightened by the general failure of the Administration in the field of Public Relations.

(6) Increasing resentment at the growing concentration of certain trades in the hands of foreigners, particularly at the increase in the number of Syrian merchants.

B. Economic.

(1) The announcement of the Government that it would remain neutral in the dispute which had arisen between the traders and the people of the Gold Coast over high prices of imported goods and which led to the organized boycott of January–February, 1948.

(2) The continuance of war-time control of imports, and the shortage and high prices of consumer goods which were widely attributed to the machinations of European importers.

(3) The alleged unfair allocation and distribution of goods in short supply, by the importing firms.

(4) The Government's acceptance of the scientists' finding that the only cure for Swollen Shoot disease of cocoa was to cut out diseased trees,

and their adoption of that policy, combined with allegations of improper methods of carrying it out.

(5) The degree of control in the Cocoa Marketing Board, which limited the powers of the farmers' representatives to control the vast reserves which are accumulating under the Board's policy.

(6) The feeling that the Government had not formulated any plans for the future of industry and agriculture, and that, indeed, it was lukewarm about any development apart from production for export.

C. Social.

(1) The alleged slow development of educational facilities in spite of a growing demand, and the almost complete failure to provide any technical or vocational training.

(2) The shortage of housing, particularly in the towns, and the low standards of houses for Africans as compared with those provided for Europeans.

(3) The fear of wholesale alienation of tribal lands leaving a landless peasantry.

(4) Inadequacy of the legal powers of Government necessary to deal with speeches designed to arouse disorder and violence. . . .

In putting forward many of our proposals, particularly those dealing with political reform, we are conscious of certain risks brought to our notice by Africans as well as Europeans.

It would be idle to ignore the existence of bribery and corruption in many walks of life in the gold coast, admitted to us by every responsible African to whom we addressed the question. That it may spread as further responsibility devolves upon the African is a possibility which cannot be denied. No nation can rise to greatness upon any such foundations. It is a challenge, therefore, to the Gold Coast Africans to set their house in order and a challenge which we believe will be taken up under the weight of responsibility. In any event, in our view its existence cannot be accepted as a barrier on the road to self-government.

Again, in discussion with many Africans, we found a marked disinclination to face realities. A tendency existed to take refuge in ill-founded optimism that things would come right in the end, or that someone would find the answers. This was exemplified in their attitude towards Swollen Shoot, a belief that Government funds were inexhaustible, and a blithe disregard of the complexities of modern economic organization and the like. The hard truth that every penny of Government expenditure comes out of the taxpayer's pocket, has nowhere penetrated public understanding.

Save among the older population, there is an unconfessed desire for Europeanization, at least in many aspects. We say, unconfessed, because, while undoubtedly growing, it is not yet strong enough to cast off the shackles of tribalism. But the hands of the clock cannot be put back. The movement is gathering momentum, even if cloaked at times by anti-racial expressions. We doubt if it is sufficiently realized what problems these changes entail. Native authority in its widest sense is diminishing. The old religions are being undermined by modern conceptions. Earlier disciplines are weakening. Others must be devised to take their place. . . .

So far as the economic life of the country is concerned, we were struck by the high costs of production ruling in the Gold Coast. Many of the commodities, both industrial and agricultural, the export of which it is hoped to develop in the future, would be too costly to compete in world markets. It is essential, therefore, if the commercial aspirations of the people are to be realized, that productivity be increased. . . . Upon such increase depends the means to pay for all social services and for the creation of a higher standard of life. . . .

We are satisfied that in the conditions existing today in the Gold Coast, a substantial measure of constitutional reform is necessary to meet the legitimate aspirations of the indigenous population. The fact that . . . the Colony, Ashanti and the Northern Territories present, in some aspects, different problems, by reason of the varying stages of cultural, political and economic development at which each has arrived, does not in our view provide a valid excuse for delay. . . .

In so far as our proposals are acceptable, we recommend them as the basis of constitutional reform for a probationary period of ten years. At the end of that period the whole matter should be reviewed in the light of the experience gained. We do not believe that an atmosphere of stability would be created by any shorter period of trial.

The new Constitution, ushered in with such promise in 1946, was no doubt well intentioned. Its weakness, in our view, lay in its conception. It was obviously conceived in the light of pre-war conditions. . . . In [the post-war] background, the 1946 Constitution was outmoded at birth. . . .

The concession of an African elected majority in the Legislature, in the absence of any real political power, provided no outlet for a people eagerly emerging into political consciousness. On the other hand, it provided an effective stimulant for intelligent discontent. The real and effective political government remained in the hands of the Executive Council. Composed of *ex officio* and nominated members, it was the instrument of power. The Legislature was largely a Chamber of Debate.

The 1946 Constitution did nothing to decentralize the machinery of government. Government continued to concern itself with the details of preeminently local affairs. The District Commissioner still controlled matters of local concern. Africans, thus, even at lower levels, were still deprived of the school of political experience to be found in local management.

Only in Native Administration, residing largely in a hierarchy of vested interests, jealously guarded by Chiefs and Elders, was the African provided with an approach to political expression. Even where an enlightened Native Administration admitted some fresh entrants into the fold of the State Council, it was conceded as a great privilege and not conferred as an elementary right.

We have no doubt that this policy of rule through the Chiefs possessed many advantages. But . . . great questioning has everywhere arisen, particularly among the classes with little or no say in affairs. . . . We have found an intense suspicion that the Chiefs are being used by the Government as an instrument for the delay if not the suppression of the political aspiration of the people. The fact that destooling—once the absolute privilege of a dissatisfied people . . . has been made the subject of a well-defined code, under the supervision of Government, is itself the object of grave suspicion. The view is advanced that so long as the chief accepts and supports the government policy he will receive Government support, however much he has become the object of dislike to his people. That there is no evidence to support this view, is beside the point. . . . Nothing impressed us so much as the volume of evidence we received, not alone from the more forward sections of the community, of the intense objection to Chiefs being elected to and sitting in the Legislative Council. We were constantly reminded that the place of the Chief was among his people. Apart from this, we found great difficulty in getting any universal agreement on the precise place to be occupied by the Chief in any new political system. . . .

While for ourselves we are unable to envisage the growth of commercialization in the Gold Coast, with the retention of native institutions, save in a form which is a pale historical reflection of the past, we do not think we are called upon to make any immediate recommendation for the solution of a matter upon which Africans themselves are not in agreement. Our sole concern is to see that in any new constitutional development there is such modification as will prevent existing institutions standing in the way of general political aspirations. . . .

The moral justification for Britain remaining in the Gold Coast lies in this: out of a population of approximately four and a half million Africans . . . barely ten percent is literate. We have no reason to suppose that power

in the hands of a small literate minority would not tend to exploit the illiterate majority in accordance with the universal pattern of what has happened elsewhere in the past throughout the world. His majesty's Government therefore, has a moral duty to remain until

(a) The literate population has by experience reached a stage when selfish exploitation is no longer the dominant motive of political power, or
(b) The bulk of the population has advanced to such a stage of literacy and political experience as will enable it to protect itself from gross exploitation;
(c) Some corresponding degree of cultural, political and economic achievement has been attained by all three areas, now part of the Gold Coast.

Pending the happening of these events, two matters in our view call for immediate attention:

(i) The Constitution and Government of the country must be so reshaped as to give every African of ability, an opportunity to help to govern the country, so as not only to gain political experience, but also to experience political power. We are firmly of opinion that anything less than this will only stimulate national unrest. Government through advisory committees, as a measure of reform, in our view would be quite unacceptable.
(ii) A forward policy of Africanization must take place in the public services, so that in all appointments or promotions, having laid down the standards of qualifications, the first question to be asked is "Is there an African capable of filling the appointment?"

Their constitutional recommendations include:

Local authorities in which provision is made for an African elected element; regional councils for the Colony, Ashanti and the Northern territories, with executive powers for, e.g. Health, Education, Housing, local communications and social services; members to be elected by the local and town councils; an extension of town councils.

A house of Assembly of 45 elected (⅓ from each region) members and 5 nominated, as well as *ex officio* members, chosen for four years (unless dissolved earlier on advice of the Board of Ministers). A Board of 9 ministers, 5 being African members of the Assembly and 4 *ex officio*; nominated by the Governor and approved by resolution of assembly; African ministers removable on a ¾ vote of censure.

Women and Their Organizations during the Convention People's Party Period

Takyiwaa Manuh

Before 1949, women in Ghana were not actively involved in politics but this changed with the emergence of Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) in 1949. Indeed, the CPP and Nkrumah introduced a new paradigm in Gold Coast politics when they implemented strategies to involve the youth, the grassroots, and women in mainstream politics. In "Women and Their Organizations during the Convention People's Party Period," a chapter in a scholarly book, African studies professor and lawyer Takyiwaa Manuh examines the contributions of women to the CPP's struggles for office and ultimately the eventual attainment of political self-determination for Ghana. In the excerpts below, Manuh also explores the roles of women in the independent state and their relationship with Nkrumah's government. Finally, she focuses on the dominant women's organizations such as the National Federation of Ghana Women and the National Council of Ghana Women and their efforts to empower Ghanaian women.

Introduction

Women cannot be ignored in any assessment of the "Life and Work of Kwame Nkrumah," since it is clear from even a cursory study of the Convention People's Party (CPP) period that they played a significant part in events as well as constituting an important base for the CPP. Nkrumah himself suggests this by his axiom that "the degree of a country's revolutionary awareness may be measured by the political maturity of its women." . . .

Women in Ghanaian Society

The Convention People's Party, which came to power professing to speak for the masses, had women among its strongest supporters. C. L. R. James notes in his book *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* that "in the struggle

for independence, one market woman . . . was worth any dozen Achimota graduates . . ." Together with the workers, young men educated in primary schools and the unemployed, women became some of Nkrumah's ablest, most devoted, and most fearless supporters. Women followed Nkrumah across the country on his speaking tours, vigorously championing the struggle for independence. . . . These women fed Nkrumah and his followers and financed them, and it is alleged that without the support of some of these women, Nkrumah could not have survived in Accra. In addition, they were efficient organizers who could bring thousands of people together for a rally at the shortest possible notice. . . .

Women in the Anticolonial Struggle

With the return of Nkrumah to the Gold Coast and his breakaway from the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) to form the CPP, women's involvement in politics on a national scale became possible for the first time. While some of the women in the towns had identified with the UGCC, the lack of a mass base of the UGCC to successfully prosecute the struggle for independence had prevented meaningful action, and some of the first women to join the CPP had started out with the UGCC. With the birth of the CPP, a Women's Section was formed almost simultaneously, and these women worked tirelessly within it, for the achievement of "self-government now." Women such as Mabel Dove Danquah and Akua Asabea Ayisi worked side by side with Nkrumah on the *Evening News* writing articles, demanding independence and exposing themselves to the risks attendant on political activity in a colonial regime. Women took part in the "Positive Action Campaign," and Leticia Quaye, Akua Asabea Ayisi, and others went to prison. Memorable among them was an old lady in her sixties, Arduah Ankrah, who used to call herself "Mrs Nkrumah," and who was convicted for the contempt of exhibiting unruly behavior in court during the trial of some of the campaigners. . . .

Nkrumah recounts in his autobiography that

> much of the success of the CPP has been due to the efforts of women members. From the very beginning, women have been the chief field Organisers. They have travelled through innumerable towns and villages in the role of propaganda secretaries and have been responsible for the most part in bringing about the solidarity and cohesion of the party.

While Nkrumah was in prison, he had learned that at a rally in Kumasi, a woman party member who had adopted the name "Ama Nkrumah" got up on the platform and ended a fiery speech by getting hold of a razor blade and slashing her face. She smeared the blood over her body and challenged the men present to do likewise, in order to show that no sacrifice was too great in their united struggle for freedom and independence. . . .

In May 1951, the CPP appointed four women, namely, Mrs. Leticia Quaye, Mrs. Hanna Cudjoe, Madam Ama Nkrumah, and Madam Sophia Doku, as Propaganda Secretaries. They travelled around the country, enrolling men and women into the CPP and into its Women's Section and Youth League. Wherever there were CPP branches, women's wings proliferated, and these women's wings sponsored rallies where the Propaganda Secretaries spoke about CPP policies and collected contributions for the Party. . . . Inasmuch as independence sought to end colonial domination and create better conditions of life for the population in the form of more schools and hospitals, better drinking water and greater access to all of these amenities, women had more to gain from independence. . . .

Political and Civic Rights

In 1959, the Representation of the People (Women Members) Act was passed. This Act made special provision for the election of women as members of the National Assembly, and reflected the conscious desire of the newly-independent state to have women participate in national affairs at the highest levels. It made provision for the election of ten women as additional members of the National Assembly who were to hold office and be subjected to the same rights and disabilities as elected members of parliament under the Electoral Provisions Ordinance of 1953. New legislation in 1960 repealed the 1959 Act and provided for a different method of election for new women members. Elections were held in June 1960 for the special Women's seats, and the names of the new members were published in the *Ghana Gazette* in July, 1960.

Accordingly, ten women parliamentarians took their seats at the first session of the First Parliament of the Republic of Ghana. This move was not without its critics. The Honourable Mr. Victor Owusu, Opposition Member of Parliament, in his comments on the President's Sessional Address, referred to the women parliamentarians as "a sprinkling of 'lip-sticked' and 'pan-caked' faces of doubtful utility to the deliberations of the House." This was met with a swift rebuttal from Sophia Doku, woman member for the Eastern Region, and he had to apologize hurriedly.

Nkrumah catapulted women onto the political scene in a way that was new both in Ghana and Africa. For him, this was part of the attempt at projecting the African Personality and at raising the status of African Womanhood. Thus, in addition to the women parliamentarians, a woman deputy minister and women district commissioners were appointed. It was not without significance that the woman deputy minister hailed from the North. For long isolated from the rest of the country in political, social, and cultural terms, the Northern Territories had functioned as a labour reserve under colonialism and was at a lower level of development than most other parts of Ghana. . . .

Women were appointed to serve on the boards of corporations, schools, and town councils. Most of these women had been with the party from its inception, and their occupations as teachers, housewives, and the like, reflected the class composition of the CPP. The main criterion for appointment seems to have been loyalty to the party, a principle similarly applied to the men who rose into prominence with the CPP. . . .

Educational, Economic, and Social Measures

As well as enhancing women's political and civic roles, the CPP government pursued measures to advance women's educational levels and enhance their social and economic roles. . . . The access of girls to education, particularly at lower levels, was facilitated, and by 1965–66 girls constituted nearly 44 percent of total primary school enrolments, 35 percent in middle school, and 25 percent at secondary school. In addition, many elderly women participated actively in the mass education campaigns of the period.

The policy of providing segregated education for girls in mission schools was combined with the establishment of mixed secondary schools which provided places for the increased numbers of girls leaving middle schools. At the level of training colleges, however, no such policy seems to have been pursued, and many women's training colleges opened during this period to meet regional needs. One of these was the Tamale Women's Training College, and in a speech to inaugurate its opening, Nkrumah recounted the hitherto existing difficulties in the way of Northern girls who had completed Standard VII and wished to teach. Nkrumah noted his gratification at the presence of "a lady of Northern extraction on the staff of the college."

More women entered the Universities and higher institutions of learning, and others were sent abroad, together with men, to pursue courses in medicine, dentistry, and other technical courses to meet the requirements of the development plans. Women went on short courses to Israel, the So-

viet Union and other Eastern-bloc countries for courses in co-operatives, trade unionism, and fisheries, among others. These courses meant diversification in the fields of employment open to women, and while the result of colonial education had been that the principal profession open to women was teaching, women could now be found working in many other areas. By the end of CPP rule (1966) there were a number of women doctors, dentists, lawyers, graduate teachers, administrative officers, parliamentarians, and a judge of the Supreme Court. . . .

In addition to the educational and economic measures, we may note briefly certain socio-cultural and moral matters affecting women which Nkrumah and the CPP attempted to resolve. The first concerned the state of nudity which existed among women in parts of then Northern Territories. While this state of affairs reflected environmental and cultural factors, it was also seen as a manifestation of a state of under-development. Nkrumah was concerned about it, and instituted measures to deal with it. . . .

The National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW)

In the period between 1953 and 1960, there were two predominant women's organizations. One of these was the National Federation of Gold Coast Women. . . . The other was the Ghana Women's League formed by Mrs. Hannah Cudjoe. In addition there were many women's benevolent associations, mutual aid and church groups.

The Ghana Women's League seems to have been very political, and concerned itself with local, nationalist, and continental issues. Its leader, Mrs. Hannah Cudjoe, who was also a CPP Propaganda Secretary, appears to have combined the insights gained in the nationalist struggle with her work among women. The League toured the Northern, Brong-Ahafo, and Central regions and gave talks and demonstrations on nutrition, childcare, and the distribution of cloths. . . . The League also saw its task as explaining issues of national concern to women, and it toured the Northern Region in March, 1960, to explain the impending national census.

In addition to these national issues, the League engaged itself with more general issues of immediate import. Such an engagement was over the French atomic tests in the Sahara, and it led a demonstration of over six hundred people including market women against the French atomic test. . . . The Cape Coast branch of the Federation organized a house-to-house educational campaign to explain the census in the fishing areas of Cape Coast. However, there were differences between the two organizations consisting mainly in the avowedly political nature of the League and the politically

neutral posture of the Federation. This was to come to a head in the proposals for a merger between the two organizations and other smaller ones to form the National Council of Ghana Women.

In 1960, a conference was called of all women of Africa and of African descent. Before this conference took place, it was considered necessary to unite the various women's groups into one organization, operating as an integral wing of the CPP. To this end, invitations were sent to the Federation of Ghana Women led by Dr. Evelyn Amarteifio and to the Ghana Women's League of Mrs. Hannah Cudjoe. As well, invitations went to several women's benevolent associations. . . .

The Council was inaugurated by Dr. Nkrumah on 10th September, 1960, as the only recognized body under which all Ghanaian women were to be organized to contribute their quota to the political, educational, social, and economic reconstruction of Ghana. Branches were soon established throughout the country under the party's auspices. As an integral wing of the party, it had representation on the Party's Central Committee and participated in its programs with some of its members wielding considerable influence in national affairs. In what has become known as the Dawn Broadcast, it was decided that there should be no separate membership cards for the integral organizations of the party, the party membership card alone being sufficient. As well, it was decided that all appointments to the Council and to the other integral organizations would be made by the Party's Committee and that with the formation of the NCGW, the women's section of the Party had ceased to exist. . . .

Through the auspices of the Council, many young women were sent abroad for further studies and to pursue short courses. Others were found employment in state organizations and corporations as a reward for services to the party or more commonly, through family connections and other nepotistic practices. Market women constituted a big proportion of the membership of the Council, and mention has already been made of their control of space and goods within the markets. These women contributed vast sums of money to the party and were vocal at party gatherings and were fanatical in their support of the CPP. They could be seen spreading clothes on the ground for party functionaries to walk on at rallies and harassed opponents of the party and its policies. Typical of such tendencies was the "CPP Emashi Nonn," described as "a militant women's group with headquarters at Bukom (a quarter of Accra) which sprang up as a reaction to the adverse criticisms of the 1961 budget." Basil Davidson referred to the CPP as a "traders" party with a trader's attitude to politics, and these women played no mean role in it. . . .

Ghanaian Women and African Unity

In July, 1960, the Conference of Women of Africa and of African Descent was held in Accra. It was opened by the President, who used the occasion to make an appeal to African Women. He declared that the women of Africa had a mission to fulfill by creating better conditions of life for their sons and daughters. They were therefore to work hand in hand militantly with their men to end colonialism and imperialism. He asked the women to reflect on the burning issues of the time—why women of South Africa had to be in possession of passes in order to go about their ordinary business; why the apartheid overlords should mow down defenseless women and children; the French presence in Algeria, and South Africa's disregard of the United Nations resolutions on Namibia. . . .

In furtherance of the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union, a Council of Women of the Union of African States was formed. Meetings were held in member countries for the promotion of the foundation of the movement, which would co-ordinate and harmonize the activities of organizations of African women throughout the continent. . . .

At the end of the Conference, the Council of Women of the Union of African States reaffirmed once more its strong desire to strengthen its efforts towards the realization of the total liberation of Africa as well as her unity and social and economic reconstruction. In a communiqué, the women pledged to work for the effective liberation and rapid emancipation of African women, to fight against illiteracy, which is one of Africa's greatest setbacks, to protect children and safe-guard their interests and to harness all their efforts towards the establishment of world peace.

Birth of Ghana

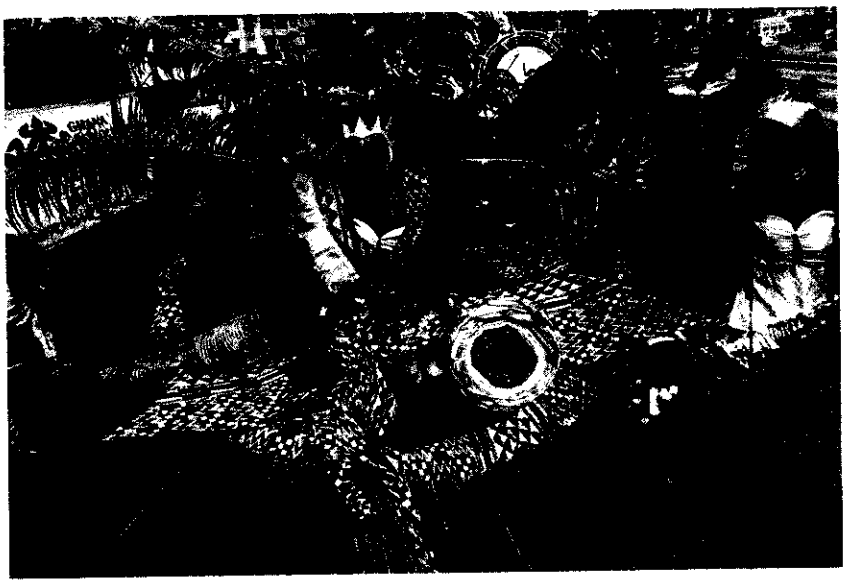
Lord Kitchener

Arguably the foremost calypsonian of the twentieth century, Lord Kitchener (1922–2000) was born Aldwyn Roberts in Trinidad. Even after migrating to Britain in 1948, Kitchener continued to be a major force on the calypso scene in the Caribbean. By its nature, the musical genre of calypso often involves social commentary and addresses topical issues. Calypsonians used the genre to express their varied concerns, including their affinity for African independence. In 1952, for instance, the Sekondi Morning Telegraph *newspaper reported that calypso musicians in London had composed a special song for Kwame Nkrumah. Calypso found a place of prominence in the musical landscape of Ghana and its melodies were often incorporated in Ghana's own indigenous popular music, highlife. Remarkably, despite the abundance of different local musical styles in Ghana and notwithstanding the existence of the popular music forms such as highlife and gome, it was Kitchener's calypso composition that captured the imagination and spirit of Ghana's independence. "Birth of Ghana" is considered an essential part of the "soundtrack" of Ghana's independence celebrations, and the reason for this is evident in the song's lyrics, presented here.*

This day will never be forgotten,
The sixth of March 1957.
When the Gold Coast successfully,
Get their Independence officially.

Ghana! Ghana is the name.
Ghana! We wish to proclaim.
We will be jolly, merry and gay,
The sixth of March, Independence Day.

Doctor Nkrumah went out his way,
To make the Gold Coast what it is today.
He endeavored continually,
To bring us freedom and liberty.



Performers at the Accra Carnival, 2013. Carnival is one of many imports from the Caribbean and the broader African diaspora in the Americas. Photograph by Clifford Campbell, Accra, June 2013.

Ghana! Ghana is the name.
Ghana! We wish to proclaim.
We will be jolly, merry and gay,
The sixth of March, Independence Day.

The Doctor began as agitator,
Then he became popular leader.
He continued to go further,
And now he is Ghana's Prime Minister.

Ghana! Ghana is the name.
Ghana! We wish to proclaim.
We will be jolly, merry and gay,
The sixth of March, Independence Day.

The national flag is a lovely scene,
With beautiful colors, red, gold and green.
And the black star in the center
Representing the freedom of Africa.

Ghana! Ghana is the name.
Ghana! We wish to proclaim.
We will be jolly, merry and gay,
The sixth of March, Independence Day.

Congratulation from Haile Selassie,
Was proudly received by everybody.
He particularly comment
On the Doctor's move to self-government.

Ghana! Ghana is the name.
Ghana! We wish to proclaim.
We will be jolly, merry and gay,
The sixth of March—Independence Day.

Independence Speech

Kwame Nkrumah

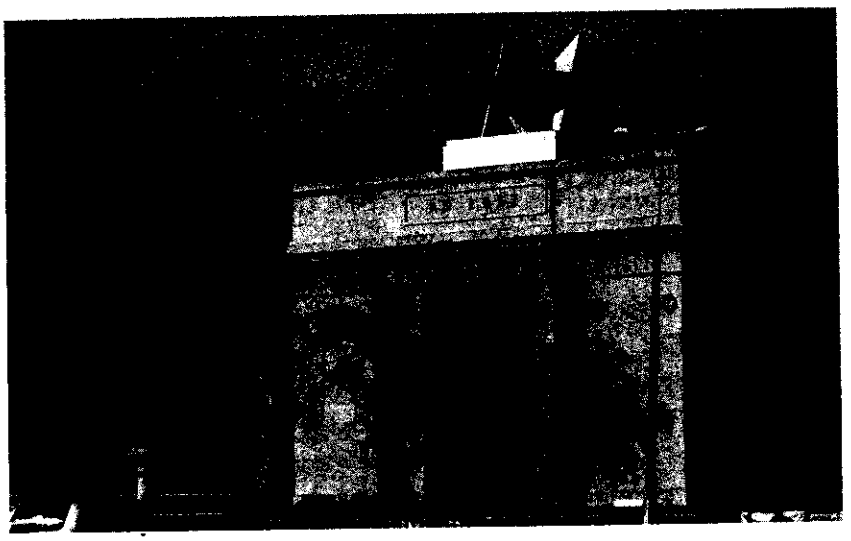
Ghana's first prime minister and later first president, Kwame Nkrumah (1909–72), was born Francis Nwia Kofi Ngonloma (mistakenly recorded as "Nkrumah") in Nkroful, Ghana. His speech delivered on Ghana's independence, March 6, 1957, served as the first official public utterance of the new Ghanaian nation—which alone ascribes great importance to it. The real significance of Nkrumah's speech, however, was its overt pronouncement of a pan-African agenda and Ghana's role in it. For Nkrumah, the country's independence was a harbinger of Africa's freedom from colonial rule. The excerpt from this speech below recognizes the various groups whose contributions culminated in the country's independence and captures the hope of the country's leadership.

At long last, the battle, has ended! And thus, Ghana, your beloved country is free forever! And here again, I want to take the opportunity to thank the chiefs and people of this country, the youth, the farmers, the women, who have so nobly fought and won this battle.

Also, I want to thank the valiant ex-service men, who have so co-operated with me, in this mighty task of freeing our country from foreign rule and imperialism!

And, as I pointed out at our Party conference at Saltpond, I made it quite clear that from now on, today, we must change our attitudes, our minds; we must realize that from now on we are no more a colonial but free and independent people! But also, as I pointed out, that also entails hard work. I am depending upon the millions of the country, the chiefs and people, to help me to reshape the destiny of this country. We are prepared to build it up and make it a nation that will be respected by every other nation in the world!

We know we are going to have difficult beginning, but again, I am relying upon your support. I am relying upon your hard work. Seeing you in these thousands, it doesn't matter how far my eye go, I can see, that you are here in your millions, and my last warning to you is that you are to stand firm behind us, so that we can prove to the world, that when the African is given chance, he can show to the world that he is somebody!



Black Star Gate. This was built as part of the architecture of nationalism to commemorate Ghana's birth as a nation. Photograph by Clifford Campbell, Accra, June 2013.

We have awakened, we shall no more go back to sleep anymore! Today from now on, there is a new African in the world. That new African is ready to fight his own battle, and show that after all, the black man is capable of managing his own affairs. We are going to demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, young as we are, that we are prepared to lay our foundation. As I said in the Assembly just a few minutes ago, I made a point, that we are going to see that we create our own Africa personality and identity! It is the only way in which we can show the world, that we are ready for our own battles.

But today, may I call upon you all, that on this great day, let us all remember, that nothing in the world can be done, unless it has the purport and support of God. We have won the battle and again rededicate ourselves not only in the struggle to emancipate other territories in Africa, our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up to the total liberation of the African continent!

Let us now, fellow Ghanaians, let us now, ask for God's blessings. And for only two seconds, in your thousands and millions, I want to ask you to pause only for one minute, and give thanks to Almighty God, for having led us through obstacles, difficulties, imprisonments, hardship and suffering, to have brought us to our end of trouble today. One minute silence.

Ghana is free forever. And here, I will ask the band to play the Ghana National Anthem.

Obama's Visit as a Signifier of Ghanaians' "Colonial Mentality"

Kwabena Akurang-Parry

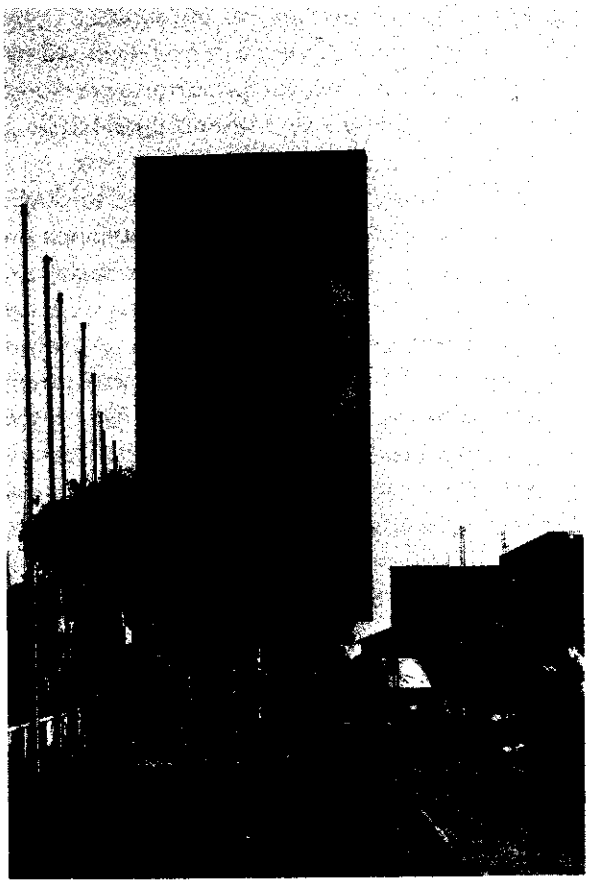
The influence of industrialized countries on the cultural practices of Ghana is quite profound. Not surprisingly, these influences often come at the detriment of maintaining core cultural ideas and behaviors, as even the custodians of culture often go too far in imitating foreign cultural practices. The use of schnapps in the performance of libation and dressing in imported Dutch wax prints or Western suits at culturally significant occasions are just a few examples. Ghana's arbitrary attachment to cultural imports of its colonial past further complicates this. The general picture that emerges, then, is that the Ghanaian tends to extol all things foreign. In the following op-ed excerpt, Kwabena Akurang-Parry, professor of African and world history at Shippensburg University, addresses this tendency by giving examples of practices that seem to serve as harbingers of "cultural genocide."

"The only thing that Ghanaians probably do better than everybody else on our planet is to adopt a foreign culture and try to outdo the originators of that culture. The extent of our addiction to cultures other than our own is simply mindboggling." Quoted from Nana Akwasi Twumasi, "Ghanaians and Wedding: Are We Losing Our Mind?," Ghanaweb Feature Article of Sunday, 23 August 2009. Using President Barack Obama's visit as my unit of analysis, framed around and illuminated by relatable everyday stories and experiences, I offer some stories and incidences as reflections on Ghanaians' huge appetite for all things foreign and distaste for our own way of life, indeed, what we may conceptualize as pathways of cultural genocide. Let me offer a brief caveat: the stories and experiences offered here, exemplified by Obama's visit, do not present any precise chronology of our travels along pathways of cultural genocide. Rather, I have stitched together everyday experiences and stories to provide a cohesive account of what Kwame Nkrumah, among other things, theorized as neocolonialism and which Adu Boahen characterized as "colonial mentality"; indeed, both mirror the ways

that Ghanaians dramatized Obama's visit. In sum, we are so taken in by foreign things to the detriment of our own culture and development as a nation. As a result, Ghana is now a petri dish in which the nurturing of one of the debilitating viruses of our time occurs: a tide of sustained self-fulfilling marginalization of Ghanaians and, by extension, Africans as a whole.

Excepting the attainment of independence in 1957, there is no doubt that no single celebratory event had focused so much global attention on Ghana as Obama's recent visit to Ghana. Undoubtedly, most Ghanaians appreciated Obama's visit; it made us proud, at least, knowing that Ghana is at the forefront of progress and stability in Africa. For those of us tucked away overseas, our gingerly hope is that the ways that the worldwide media showcased Ghana would enable our foreign hosts, at least, to fathom the spatial location of Ghana during casual conversations. In sum, the visit embodies moments of great possibilities and watersheds of excellence for the African world which Ghana championed during the heyday of the fruitful, empowering Nkrumah epoch.

At another level, and indeed the focal point of this essay, Obama's visit illustrates the tyranny of neocolonialism and how it has gripped the mind-set of Ghanaians in farcical ways. During the visit, state-sponsored special cloth imprinted with Obama's image went on sale. I would hazard that Ghana is the only place in the world where this could occur. Overnight, the American flag dominated masts everywhere and completely eclipsed the flag of Ghana. Schoolchildren, as in the colonial era, were forced to stand in the intimidating sun to honor the presence of Obama as if he was a provincial governor on tour of duty in a backwater colonized nineteenth-century world. Also, prepubescent females adorned with colorful traditional costumes flaunted their budding feminine assets as they danced to the de/cadence of politicized drums to welcome Obama. Unashamedly, members of Parliament and government officials, like children chasing butterflies in a playground, struggled among themselves to capture photos of Obama with their cell phones. Again, this is something that could only happen in Ghana! Our chiefs/kings were not about to be outperformed in the political theatrics that heralded Obama's visit. For instance, some chiefs rebuilt their durbar grounds, renovated palaces, regroomed their political space, pressured the government to renovate dilapidated state buildings, retuned their state drums, compelled *asafo mma* [so-called companies] to practice their craft, etc. Sad to say that in the end, some of the chiefs did not even get the chance to see Obama. Above all, Ghanaians hoped that Obama would bring a magic wand to solve all their problems, indeed, what one commentator aptly called our dependency syndrome. In nursery school, one of the



One of the many billboards in the Ghanaian capital of Accra signaling *akwaaba* (welcome) to President Obama on his visit to Ghana in summer 2009. Photograph by Clifford Campbell, Accra, 2009.

rhymes that was planted in our young, fertile minds was the best comes from the West. In the long term, such nursery rhymes have come to stay and are manifesting in several prophetic ways through our own agencies and in/actions.

Simply put, it was expected that Ghanaians would showcase their proverbial hospitality during Obama's visit, and we did, but went overboard, hence the whole visit, to use a metaphorical stretch, was like the Second Coming of Christ in Ghana. Not surprisingly, an ordinary president of a backwater American college who visited Ghana years ago as a tourist was able to gain audience with the president of Ghana! A Ghanaian professor plying his trade in America took his students on a study-abroad trip to Ghana. At the Kotoka International Airport, Ghanaian immigration officers bypassed the grey-haired Ghanaian professor, who had introduced the group as his study-abroad students from America to the immigration officers, and asked

the white teenage students, to their surprise, about who was their real team leader.

For the sake of analogical clarity, let us summon additional hyperbolic stories as our embroidery for emphasis. Ghanaians now celebrate Mother's Day, Father's Day, Children's Day, Grand-Parents' Old-Age Days, etc. There may be Chinese Dog's Day in the pipeline. Very soon there will be Japanese Chopsticks Day and Italian Pizzas Day. The American flag and the Union Jack will soon become our national uniform! Valentine's Day is now our national festival; paradoxically, we have abandoned our indigenous practices like storytelling, *bragoru*, and *dipo*, which, among others, taught the youth about love, respect, reciprocity, and duty. Yes, we have latched onto Valentine's Day, which promotes capitalistic, orgiastic behavior. Certainly there is nothing wrong with celebrating these "global" days. The problem is that in the process of embracing foreign cultures and values, we continue to marginalize and abandon our local languages, communal values, festivals, ancestor reverence, rites of passage, and so on that sustain our collective well-being and ontological harmony.

Indeed, at the center stage of our looming cultural genocide is our fascination for and unquestioned acceptance of all things foreign, especially "white superiority." In 1997, I was traveling from Sekondi-Takoradi to Accra when we were told that a portion of the Beposo Bridge on the route had partially collapsed so all vehicles on both sides of the bridge had to stop for the necessary repairs to be made. After we had waited for several hours, a team of engineers arrived to repair the bridge. I made my way to the bridge to see what was being done and heard my nickname, "Agoro," echo off the bridge in the dimly lit environment. To my utmost delight, three of the engineers were my schoolmates at the Presbyterian Boys' Secondary School (PRESEC), Legon. But the happy encounter was quickly snuffed out of my system when I realized that the Ghanaian engineers were being supervised by two white men. Ironically, even in building local bridges (pun intended), we have to use the superior expertise of foreigners!

There are Ghanaians who have never been to the Ukraine, but have adopted some affected Ukrainian accents! American slangs are highly prized in Ghana. Just pick up the phone in the US of A, God's own country in the estimation of Ghanaians, to speak with Ghanaians in Ghana and you would come across concocted American accents! Someone asked me whether I was calling from the US of A because my accent was still Ghanaianized, but before I could respond, his adopted American accent departed from him like the sun parting company with darkness! Our television and radio hosts mimic foreign accents as if they have had plastic surgery to re-

place their Ghanaian tongues. I recently watched a Ghanaian film that has a bumbling "Americanized" character who kept calling everyone in the film "Nigger" this or that. Ghanaians like to imitate anything foreign, and we often overdo it: the fact of the matter is that even African American comedians and "gangster" rappers who deployed the N-word in recent times have now abandoned it. Rather surprisingly, the film was made in 2009.

In 2006, an Akuapem scholar eulogized his deceased father in Akuapem Twi, spicing his words with proverbs and symbols of local color in the hope that the assembled mourners would admire his "native" eloquence. But in the end, he disappointed the teeming mourners who had come to feed on a menu of American accent(s) conjured by their native son who teaches in America. The fact that he was literate in Akuapem Twi did not matter! What would have mattered was his use of "gonna," "wanna," "hey men," "ya knaw," even the N-word, etc.! You bet the disappointed family queried their son about why he had used Akuapem Twi in elegizing his deceased father, and he told them that Westerners spoke their own languages at funerals. The son's brief, but apt response, was paradoxically conceived as a signifier of too much education, and in the parlance of Ghanaians, he was "too known."

Not surprisingly during the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Ghana's independence President J. A. Kufuor entombed himself in some Italian-made and carpenter-built suit, with a flaunting nineteenth-century Victorian imperial waistcoat to match. It was as if President Kufuor wanted to remind the former imperialists, euphemistically called "colonial powers," that Ghanaians still looked up to them for leadership! The irony of it all is that foreign dignitaries adorned the Ghanaian kente! Well, on that day, Nkrumah turned in his grave and confronted the African elites that are now hegemonizing and privileging Western cultures! Anyone who has seen photos of our founding fathers and mothers, whose period spanned the golden age of decolonization from the late 1940s to about 1966, when the overthrow of Nkrumah by the CIA-induced homegrown forces dimmed the splendid history of emergent Ghana, would admire their luxuriant batakari, agbaja, kente, ntama, etc. Today, our parliamentarians, TV personalities, government officials, and even armed robbers show their stolen wealth and putative class by adorning ovenlike woolen suits in spite of the mighty unrepentant sun that bakes Mother Earth in Ghana.

In order to develop, we have to source inspiration and empowerment from our indigenous cultures to serve as counterhegemonic philosophies. Indeed, we have to figuratively peel off the retrogressive wrinkles of neocolonialism and see Western cultures as mere compasses, devoid of divined

self-fulfilling maps that always show the way to progress. Certainly, all societies are dynamic and go through phases of change predicated on renewal or decay and defined by the agency of continuity and discontinuity. Some Ghanaian sociologists and ethnographers, including Kofi A. Busia, G. K. Nukunya, J. M. Assimeng, Peter Akwasi Sarpong, and Kofi Asare Opoku, have shown that societies gain from diffusion of innovations and ideas that are osmotic worldwide at any given time, but that care is needed to sift through the various webs of change. For example, China and Japan have done remarkably well by plucking some good ideas from dominant, hegemonic cultures, but have also had the nationalistic capacity to reject fruits that are distasteful on the local tongue. For their part, African states and societies eagerly assimilate foreign influences which our neo/colonized mind-sets epitomize as Western values, synonymous with "civilization" and progress.

Oftentimes and rather paradoxically, the most educated people among us are the ones that construct and champion the pathways of cultural genocide. As noted, Boahen problematized this when he concluded: "But the last and the most serious negative impact of colonialism has been psychological . . . colonial mentality among educated Africans in particular and also among the populace in general." In sum, African states and societies continue to experience the effects of the Black holocaust–Atlantic Slave trade; European colonialism; what Kwame Nkrumah ably framed as neocolonialism; and now facets of hegemonic globalization beamed to Africans via Hollywood and the Internet, to mention a few. These avenues of domination, however defined, have enticed Africans to engage in self-depreciation. Indeed, the evidence suggests that Africans have internalized the inferior status imputed to them by Arabs and Euro-Americans. We would be stating the obvious by concluding that the upswing of "colonial mentality" of Ghanaians today appears to be more gripping than it was at the dawn of independence in the late 1940s.

Certainly due to the tyranny of space, we can't recount every story or incidence of cultural hegemony and its output of African self-depreciation—or, in fact, even self-hatred, which may be a variation on the above. Here and now, it is well to restate that there is nothing wrong with borrowing from other cultures. No society is static. In fact, change is a part of the human condition. Today, the processes of diffusion of innovations, ideas, cultures, etc. have been made easier via globalization, technology, and rapid travel. What is wrong is our collective failure to look deeper into our ontological pot so that we can retain what would make our society more workable. We are hastily dismissing our way of life, while happily borrowing other people's cultures even in some crusading and championing ways. The

irony is that non-Africans look down upon African cultures: for example, local media accounts illustrate that the Chinese and Lebanese in Ghana think that they are better than Ghanaians. Perhaps those foreigners have come to learn that Ghanaians/Africans cherish foreign cultures and look down upon an African way of life. We need to frame a coherent empowering agenda for our cultural renewal.

Mobile Phones and Our Cultural Values

Kwesi Yankah

*Human cultures invariably and to certain degrees adopt from each other, though the conditions under which such adoptions occur often shape the tensions between existing and imported cultural ideas. In Ghana, European (specifically British) views and values have infiltrated foundational cultural wisdom and the practices that flowed from it. Imported liquor rather than locally produced alcohol (*akpeteshie*) is ubiquitous in the widespread performance of libation rituals. Likewise, the mobile phone, while greatly improving communication in a country without a wired infrastructure, encroaches on certain customary norms relating to the protocol of communication among a composite people who intractably cling to culturally conditioned communicative practices such as slightly bowing in front of a parent, elder, or "traditional" official. The excerpt that follows is from a keynote address by Kwesi Yankah, renowned linguistics professor and president of Central University College in Ghana, where he explores some of these issues in context of a marked increase in the use of mobile phones in the country.*

The notion that civilization must come from abroad pervaded Africa at the dawn of independence, as was made clear in the expositions of clergymen of the Gold Coast, like Attoh Ahuma, who, though proud of African culture, saw in Westernization the way out of darkest Africa. "The impenetrable jungle around us," he said, "is not darker than the primeval forest of the human mind uncultured." Thus Africa had to emerge from the savage backwoods and come into the open where nations were made. One area that underwent modernization was communication: an attempt was made to supplant or pluralize the legacy of indigenous language and face-to-face communication, highly cherished in Africa. Modern norms would seek to move Africa from an oral to a chirographic society, and to a world of print and mass media.

The issue becomes compounded by highly advanced systems of information technology that relocate the physical world into cyberspace and transmute the vast boundaries of the world into an electronic village. The move

has been towards the globalization of culture, through the penetration of sovereign boundaries with an avalanche of uncensored Euro-Western values, all in the name of global sense of free speech, and rights of access to information. . . .

Custodians of Culture

Among the domains where the mobile phone culture has penetrated, I would like to highlight a few significant ones, to signal the extent to which the very core of indigenous tradition appears to have been permeated. I am referring to the following categories of people:

1) Those for whom privacy of communication, and general inaccessibility, is crucial for the effective exercise of their traditional responsibilities.
2) Custodians of our traditions, those responsible for preserving cultural values.
3) Those who conduct important rituals requiring intensity of silence.

The mobile phone by its very nature intrudes upon privacy and would ideally be avoided by functionaries whose duties are most effectively performed with minimum accessibility. I refer, for example, to traditional rulers, access to whom is normally restricted by a series of traditional protocol and rigid formal procedure. As a rule, the chief is not directly accessible to the public. Communication with him is routed through an intermediary, who receives and manipulates the message before relaying the information to its final destination. Partly owing to the crucial need to preserve the dignity of chieftaincy as an institution and avoid its vulgarization through direct exposure to mundane affairs, the Constitution has debarred chiefs from actively participating in politics, lest he compromise his neutrality and generally limited exposure to the hazards of worldly affairs.

Secondly, from time immemorial chiefs have been the custodians of tradition and are often the last bastion to be overcome by disruptive influences on tradition. Today, the mobile phone culture has virtually pervaded the chieftaincy institution. In places almost all chiefs and subchiefs have mobile phones, and use them regularly, sometimes receiving and transmitting messages while at serious meetings. And this is sometimes gleefully done without apologies, and would often demonstrate the wide network of contacts an individual has in the world of business. Sometimes, as soon as a phone rung, a chief would quickly exit and receive it; other times he would remain seated and take the phone call.

One chief in Ga told me the phone culture has caught on with his fetish priests, who all have mobile phones tugged in their pockets, even while conducting important rituals at the palace. But due to the disruptive propensities of the phones, he often announces that all phones must be turned off before any meeting commences. Even though the instruction would normally create inconvenience, they would all comply in the interest of the meeting.

It may therefore be said that the culture of mobile phones is gradually percolating through our way of life as Ghanaians, permeating areas of our traditional life and culture that have long been insulated against encroachment. In the domain of chieftaincy, one can easily say that the normal unavailability of chiefs for casual interaction has been defied by the culture of mobile phones. If you are lucky to have your chief's phone number, you may be lucky to catch him on the phone at a meeting of the traditional council, or house of chiefs, far away from your own location. The normal protocol of royal communication is temporarily suspended, and you may have a brief chat with your traditional ruler in the middle of a meeting, without the normal protocols. Whereas the transformation of chieftaincy into an accessible institution through modern technology makes for closer interaction between the chief and his people, it stands in danger of undermining the dignity and sanctity of the institution, since familiarity naturally breeds contempt.

Naturally the mobile phone culture has transformed lives and cultural values. The intensity of silence normally expected at funeral services, weddings, marriage ceremonies, and indeed traditional rituals can no longer be guaranteed. All it takes to undermine ritual intensity is a single phone intrusion. This is particularly significant since silence in certain settings, normally created ideal space for communication with the supernatural world. . . .

Text Messages

Significantly, contribution to the decision-making process has of late not been limited to phone communication from various distances. Text messages now have a semipermanent status on radio and television programmes, where times have been allocated for the reading of text messages on air. It is important to put on record here that a trend has started whereby text messages on radio are gradually being Ghanaianized. Not only are text messages occasionally interspersed with colloquial Ghanaian expressions and interjections. Several radio stations have told of text messages they have

received and read in Ghanaian languages. This is indeed a major development that denotes our readiness to adopt current global technologies in the service of our culture.

In this case, the global communication technology has been used to add value to local languages. It is as if to say, even though current communication revolution is undermining cultural values, it can be very carefully cultivated in the services of cultural institution. Currently available are of course various Ghanaian language fonts on the computer, which afford the user the facility of writing messages in the original Ghanaian orthography, without using the Eurocentric approximations. Indeed, this has helped textbooks to be written in Ghanaian languages. Indeed, the Linguistic Department is in the process of finishing an Akan encyclopedic dictionary, in which all diacritics, including tone marks, have been indicated, all using modern software.

In a way the mobile phone technology, without the requirements of literacy, is easier to adopt and adapt. It has transformed communication habits and enabled access to individuals and places previously declared incommunicado; but it has also transformed cultural values; privacy is on the verge of being lost, and noise pollution in certain ritual and traditional settings requiring absolute silence and tranquility have been compromised. The youth, courtesy of mobile, have often inadvertently sometimes offended the dignity of elders with mobile phone interruptions during serious deliberations. They have rudely walked out during meetings and have privatized talk in forums that require open general deliberations. They have whispered and cupped their hands over phones, hoping their voices are out of earshot; but private conversation has now entered the public domain.

The world indeed is changing, for the phenomenon has permeated the most conservative institutions in our culture. But all these take place at the onset of a new century, a new millennium, where the indigenous cultural institutions themselves are changing and evolving. The chieftaincy institution is on the verge of losing its arcane disposition; chiefs are abolishing outmoded customs. Our chiefs indeed are now part of global partners working towards local and national development. The new dialogue the phone has wrought is therefore in keeping with changes taking place the world over, where all cultures are yearning to be part of the global village. It is up to us to adapt modern technologies in ways that move us forward in development, without undermining the foundations of our cultural values. The mobile phone culture is welcome, but must be carefully nurtured to fully agree with local cultural values.